鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ
とある魔術の禁書目録（インデックス）18
電撃文庫

Toaru Majutsu no Index - Volume 18

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インデックス
18

Toaru Majutsu no Index 18

London, the headquarters of Necessarius, to which Index belongs to. This city of magic has fallen due to a coup by the "Knight Faction" led by Knight Leader. Because of the coup, the entire country of Britain collapsed into disorder, with ordinary citizens being restricted by the military. In the midst of the upheavals created by the "Reforms" of the "Knight Faction", Necessarius, with their numerous magicians, continues their war of resistance in various places.

Kamijou Touma, who travelled to Folkestone in order to save Index, had finally reached the mastermind of the coup. There waits Acqua of the Back, from "God's Right Seat". And, pointing the tip of a blade towards him, stands the figure of the second princess of the British Royal Family, Carissa...!

When science and magic cross paths, the story shall begin...!

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とある魔術の禁書目録（インデックス）⑱

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Kamachi Kazuma

Actually, even though this volume 18 continues the story of Saint George from the previous volume, I stealthily added a bit of flavour to the story. For example, the part where Queen Elizard gave a speech to the frightened masses. (Then again, the actual content of the speech itself is another thing entirely)

(Products of Dengeki Bunko)

Toaru Majutsu no Index 1~18
Toaru Majutsu no Index SS 1 & 2

Illustrator: Haimura Kiyotaka

After using the old one for a long time, I replaced my monitor and tablet. Since not too long ago the PC and the illustration software I use changed as well, I wonder if maybe my designs will change a little bit because of it?

カバー／口絵刷

とある魔術の禁書目録
インデックス
18
鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ
Ascalon
[Great Sword Ascalon]
A spiritual tool that was created by a real magician based on a piece of literature titled 'The Story of 'The Holy Sword' from the late 16th century. The weapon was created after calibrating the 'theoretical value of a sword needed to slay an evil dragon assuming that a 50 foot dragon existed'. The entire sword was made from steel, 3.5 meters long and weighing 200kg. The base of the blade has an escutcheon on it.

"Tah dah!! A big Cinderella Plan with Itsuwa!! The Great Spirit Revealing Maid outfit!!"
Member of the Amakusa Catholics — Tatemiya Saiji
"Wha-cough!? Tatemiya-san, what's with that ultimate weapon you have!?"
Member of the Amakusa Catholics — Itsuwa
"I'll give you my share, so get rid of the 3 sins of wrath, gluttony, and envy."
Ex-Roman Catholic Church nun and member of the Agnese Forces — Lucia
"Wah!! D-did you eat that? Did you just eat my food!?"
Ex-Roman Catholic Church nun and member of the Agnese Forces — Angeline
"Chomp... I didn't eat it."
Keeper of the Index of Prohibited Books and Instruments, one of the 3 main factions in Britain, the "Anglican Church Faction" — Index
"....."
Academy City's Level 0 — Kamijou Touma

"Bring me both their heads. I know he was a rival you once knew, but you have no need to go easy on him."
Second Princess of one of the 3 main factions in Britain, the "Royal Family Faction" — Carissa
"I have absolutely no idea about any acquaintances amongst the enemy troops."
Leader of one of the 3 main factions in Britain, the "Knight Faction" — Knight Leader

"Well, I don't really think I did anything wrong."

Member of a British magic cabal, "New Light" — **Floris**

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Chapter 5: The Mercenary and the Knight's Encounter and Clash. *Another_Hero.*

Part 1

October 18th, 12:30 AM.

Forty-three elite knights stood on a mountain path on the outskirts of Folkestone in Southern England.

The leader of the coup d’état, Carissa, held Curtana Original in her hand.

An innumerable number of blades sought Third Princess Villian’s life.

However, a single man stood in their way.

He was William Orwell.

He was a thug of a mercenary who was once to become a knight.

He held the spiritual item known as Ascalon in his hand. It was the result of a certain artist exaggerating the events of a true legend and calculating out all the necessary figures needed for the sword that had not actually existed to do what it was said to have done. As a result, it could theoretically kill a 50-foot dragon. What the man intended to do with that sword was quite simple.

He was not going to charge into the enemy lines and recklessly cut down the knights.

Nor was he going to create a trap or form a strategy and toy with the group all at once.

He simply brought up Ascalon and swung it down.

Doing so caused the ground at his feet to explode.

An explosive noise and a shockwave erupted.

A large amount of dust flew up and the curtain of dust obstructed the knights' vision almost instantly. The vibration that shook the earth was close to an earthquake and even the strictly trained military horses cried in fear.

"Tch!!" Knight Leader clicked his tongue amid it all.

A number of his subordinates drew back their bowstrings and fired arrows into the center of the explosion, but it was pointless.

The night wind swept away the dust.

No one was there. Only an ominous crack remained in the ground where Ascalon had been swung down.

"I see. You're thinking of Villian's safety first. If this area turned into a fierce melee, she could easily be killed," muttered Second Princess Carissa as she calmed her horse. "…At first glance it seems to have been a calm action, but it exposes your weakness. In your prime, you would have fought while protecting my pathetic little sister at the same time."

"What should we do?" asked Knight Leader.

Carissa gave a disinterested sigh in response.

"Bring me both their heads." She tightly gripped her sword that had no blade or tip. "I will see how Curtana Original is doing and have it fit my hand. Have your results before I am done."

"Understood."

"This enemy may be your old friend, but don't go easy on him."

"I cannot think of an enemy that I am acquainted with," said Knight Leader before running into the darkness without bothering to mount a horse.

The enemy was close.

At that distance, he would arrive more quickly on his own two feet.

Part 2

Third Princess Villian was being held within a certain mercenary's arm.

One arm held her and the other held the sword that was even larger than a human being, but there was no weight behind the mercenary's movements. In fact, William Orwell's trajectory was not that of a normal human.

His movements were not the movements of running.

Much like a ball thrown a long distance, he travelled over 20 meters with each step. His feet did not land just on the ground. Between his large leaps, he also found footholds on the trunks and branches of trees.

The bluish moonlight was quite striking.

The slicing cold air was pleasant.

The unique sense of floating felt like a release from the confined feeling that had been sticking to the princess.

The mercenary and the princess travelling across the night sky looked like something from a picture book.

It looked like something from the kingdoms seen in fairy tales, not the real Royal Family that had led her around as a political bargaining chip.

"Heh. Heh heh."

A laugh came from Third Princess Villian’s lips.

Not even she knew why she was laughing.

Perhaps it was from the relief of escaping her immediate danger, perhaps it was the elation at having managed to outdo Second Princess Carissa who had seemed like a precipice before her, perhaps it was due to the fact that there was someone, even if it was just one person, that was willing to stand up for her, and perhaps it was simply due to the beauty of the scenery.

Whatever the reason behind it was, she laughed.

Her mouth opened wide for the first time in a very long time. She cast aside her fetters as the third princess of the United Kingdom and gave the defenseless laugh of a normal girl.

“Ah ha ha!! Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!!”

She waved her arms and legs around in laughter so much it seemed she would slip from William’s grasp, but the mercenary did not stop.

Finally, William Orwell arrived at an unilluminated mountain path.

He softly lowered the princess in his arm to the ground and Villian asked him a question.

“Hee hee. What are we going to do now?”

“You need to run away to somewhere safe.”

As he responded, William walked over to a thicket a short distance from the mountain path. A small hill that looked like nothing more than a pile of dirt about a meter high stood there with a worn out cloth covering it. William removed the cloth and a horse made of metal with its four legs folded up underneath it lay below it.

Looking at the letters carved into the silver horse’s surface, Villian’s expression turned to one of puzzlement.

“Bayard…?”

“It does not possess the effects of the horse dreamed of by the writer at the end of the 16th century, but it does possess the ability to slip past and hide from magical searches. As long as they do not see it with their naked eyes, the knights will be unable to find it.”

“I see…”

“Bayard is set to the coordinates of a Necessarius hideout. Unlike the old fools at Canterbury, the magicians who actually fight will not abandon you.”

Third Princess Villian breathed a very, very thin breath.

Not noticing this, the mercenary continued to check over Bayard.

“I will catch up soon, but you leave on Bayard. I will deal with the knights. At the very least, I will prevent them from tracking you, so you don’t need to worry about anyth-...”

For the first time, William’s words trailed off.

The reason was Villian’s fingertips.

The third princess hung her head down and stretched out her hand slightly to grab at the mercenary’s clothes.

“That’s enough,” she said with a slight smile on her lips. “What am I supposed to do after fleeing? What am I supposed to do just because you saved my life here? My sister will soon control all of the United Kingdom and I will then be dragged out to be executed even as I struggle. I will either be killed now or a bit later. That is all you are changing here.”

Her smile lacked strength.

William Orwell merely looked at her expression.

“The Necessarius hideout Bayard will take me to will not necessarily take me in. Even if I am a member of the Royal Family, I have no real power or authority. Protecting me simply is not worth the risk.”

The princess’s wavering gaze seemed to be saying she did not believe what she

was saying.

But then why was she lying to the mercenary?

“So that’s enough. I have given up hope. Yes, that’s right. Even Knight Leader who has helped me out so much in the past has started this coup d’état and come for my life. Surely, you are the same. If the situation compelled you, you would betray me as well, wouldn’t you? Then that’s enough. I do not trust you. I just do not trust you.”

Only Villian’s words continued on.

Only her voice continued on as she carefully suppressed her feelings so as not to have her words fall apart.

“I will most likely die resenting this country and this world. There is no more reason for you to fight. No matter how much effort you put into wielding a sword for someone who does not trust you, isn’t it all for naught?”

Basically, Third Princess Villian was telling him to abandon her.

No matter how strong the mercenary was, he was still only a single person. If he truly clashed with Second Princess Carissa’s forces that controlled the entire United Kingdom, William Orwell would clearly not fare well.

So she was telling him to abandon her.

Villian was ordering him to give up his civility and leave.

“…”

William placed Ascalon on the ground next to him.

Now that both of his hands were free he moved them.

“Hyah!?” shouted Third Princess Villian.

The mercenary put his hands under the princess’s arms and lifted her up like a small child.

“U-umm…er…”

Ignoring Villian’s surprise at the sudden action, William placed the princess on Bayard’s saddle. He then lightly stroked the metal horse on its neck. That must have been some kind of signal because it rose onto its legs that had been folded up underneath it.

Letting go of Villian now that she was looking down at him, William Orwell placed the reins in her hands and spoke.

“Do not worry.”

He did not smile.

The mercenary did not know how to calm others. For that very reason, he expressed himself with his actions.

“Even if you do not trust me, my reason for fighting for you remains unshaken.”

“Wait-…”

Before Villian could respond, William Orwell lightly tapped on Bayard with the back of his hand.

As if in response, the metal horse began to move.

Third Princess Villian was thrown back and she instinctually grabbed the reigns more tightly. Bayard was moving on autopilot and she did not immediately know how to cancel that mode. She steadily moved further and further away.

“You fool…”

Without jumping off, Villian used her small hands to grip the reins as if attempting to crush them.

She had uttered those words in order to bring that mercenary away from his place of death, but they had only resulted in isolating him even further. She gritted her teeth.

“That isn’t what I wanted to hear you say! You fooooollll!!”

Part 3

William Orwell stared deep into the darkness until Bayard had completely disappeared from view.

His shoulders finally relaxed and he picked Ascalon up from the ground where it lay.

Sensing a presence, he turned around slowly.

“So the third princess is over there.” The familiar voice belonged to his old friend, the leader of the knights. “But why are you here standing in my way? Acqua of the Back, a member of God’s Right Seat of the Roman Catholic Church, should have no reason to risk his life for a princess of this country.”

The thug of a former mercenary responded with actions instead of words.

He horizontally swung the giant mass of iron that was 3.5 meters long and weighed more than 200 kilograms.

The sound of the air being sliced could be heard.

Immediately afterwards, a flash exploded out.

Not many people would have been able to tell that he had flipped the giant sword upside down and used the thick, sharp spike near the base of the back to strike a large nearby rock.

The nearby mountain surface broke to pieces as if it had exploded. A large amount of earth and sand flowed horizontally completely sealing the narrow mountain path behind William. That wall both cut off pursuit of Third Princess Villian and prevented William himself from escaping.

The knights in the area looked shocked and raised their guard, but William's old friend, the head of the knights, silently nodded.

"I see. So no matter who you are or what group you belong to, what you must do does not change. That certainly does sound like how you would think."

"…"

William held Ascalon out horizontally in a single hand as his gaze raced around the area.

With the mercenary in the center, a circle of silver armored knights spread out in a half circle with a radius of 30 meters. Swords, spears, axes, bows, staffs, and other weapons glinted in the moonlight.

There were just under 40 of them.

Looking at Knight Leader standing in the center of them, William moved his lips slightly.

"…It seems more people are going to have to die."

Hostility swelled up from the surrounding knights at those words, but Knight Leader alone nodded frankly.

"Even though our strength has been augmented with Curtana's power to a certain extent, not many of us have reached your level."

As he spoke, Knight Leader pointed his thumb at his own chest and spoke two simple words.

"We duel."

"This is a true battlefield. I have no interest in the etiquette of refined nobility. If you are serious about this, come at me all at once. If you would rather not die in vain, leave now."

"You need not worry."

Knight Leader lightly shook his arm.

At some point, a longsword with a 3 cm wide blade had appeared in his hand. It was a sword with an 80 cm long blade that was optimal for knights to use on horseback. However, its silver surface was covered in something rough and dark-red.

“I mean a duel in the old sense: a fight to the death.”

The surface of Knight Leader’s dark-red longsword started to bubble.

The bubbling was not a mere chemical reaction caused by some chemical. Some of the bubbles were even about the size of a basketball. The tens and even hundreds of those large bubbles that were clearly wider than the sword itself appeared and altogether destroyed its silhouette.

The sword took on a new form.

It was now a gigantic sword over 3 meters long just like William’s Ascalon.

“So that is Hrunting.”

Hrunting was a magical sword from an old legend that was said to have been tempered in the blood of slain enemies and to grow stronger and sharper as more powerful enemies were defeated with it.

“…Here lies the 10 years since you left. I am no longer as I was when you knocked me out in Dover,” Knight Leader quietly reported as he held that spiritual item that held the same name as a legendary blade. “I will use my 10 years to test just how much you have gained from your 10 years.”

That was a sign.

The clash between the mercenary and the knight began as they both wielded weapons made to slay superhuman monsters.

Sound disappeared.

Light flew.

William and Knight Leader charged in straight at each other and Ascalon and Hrunting struck each other. Despite the simplicity of the action, the aftereffects

that spread about the area were tremendous.

With a few moments of delay, an explosive wind blew out.

Along with a tremendous roar, a dome-shaped shockwave spread out with the two men at the center. An explosive storm spread out in an area with a radius of 100 meters and blew away the fully equipped knights. Trees were torn to pieces, the mountain surface crumbled, and the paved mountain path shattered as if it had been made of glass.

However, by the time the shockwave had expanded, the two men were nowhere to be seen.

They had leapt up into the night sky.

With a slight delay, the sound of their footsteps resounded through the darkness like gunshots. At almost 10 meters in the air, the giant swords struck twice and then a third time. The sparks looked like flashes of lightning and the knights saw the shockwaves spreading out spherically like fireworks.

Someone gave out a cry.

Someone bent over so as not to take as much damage.

The spiral of shockwaves knocked them back evenly.

“I see.”

Knight Leader landed on the very top of a thick tree and looked down at his pathetic subordinates.

That was most likely why William Orwell had let the third princess escape ahead of him. It wasn’t because he would have trouble fighting while defending her, and it wasn’t because he was heroically planning on protecting the princess to his last breath. He was simply taking measures against foolishly killing the very person he was trying to protect with his own strength.

Knight Leader stared again at his old mercenary friend who was standing atop a different large tree.

At first glance, it might have appeared that the two men were battling in a purely physical battle of clashing swords, but magic was at the essence of their actions. They could not produce such destructive force simply by increasing their physical strength to a ridiculous extent. After passing a certain line, only a path of self-destruction where one's own muscles crushed one's own organs awaited.

At the same time as they were producing such overwhelming destruction with their bodies, they were also predicting what the various negative effects and other side effects of creating the ridiculous strength and speeds were and then using assisting magic to meticulously deal with those effects. Hundreds and even thousands of those negative effects were constantly being created in battle and overlooking even one while the situation changed from instant to instant would lead to death in that high speed fight. "Exceeding the limit" was an easy thing to say, but it took all that to actually accomplish it. And even with all that, the limits of a physical body could not be completely wiped away. In some situations, it was possible to come up with an ingenious solution in the construction of ones tactics such as with Kanzaki Kaori's drawn sword technique making the battle quick. Both with Saints and with the power of Curtana, just having a large amount of power did not make one strong. In the end, someone who wished to wield a large amount of power needed the skills and disposition required to control that large amount of power.

William was strong.

Knight Leader was strong.

They did not stand in that position because they had been given some type of power. Because they had always had a large amount of power and skill, they had been able to add a special extra "power" to that and set foot in a territory that normal people could not even imagine.

This all also meant that, if one were to obstruct the magic one's opponent was using to assist in their high-speed battle, one could indirectly defeat them. However, that was not so when it came to those two.

William had his disposition he was born with as a Saint and his spells that had been further polished in God's Right Seat.

Knight Leader had Curtana and the All-English Continent as well as magic that had been optimized in his time as a knight.

The symbols that acted as keys to their magic were not something that could easily be taken from them. The two of them were extremely skilled magic users and they had gained minds that were not easily shaken by overcoming numerous wars. Even if a limb or two were severed, they would not lose control of their magic.

Just by looking at the other's pose, they gained much more information than a mere soldier would have.

It had nothing to do with their old friendship.

During the time that had passed and on the journeys they had gone on, they had constructed spells the other did not know of.

"Heh. It's true that you are quite skilled for a Saint, but it seems you aren't showing off your specialty."

"…"

"With each strike, I can feel your wounds throbbing. Since you aren't using that water of yours and you aren't carrying out that sliding high speed of yours, your defeat in Academy City must truly have had a lasting effect on you."

William did not respond.

He merely brought the giant sword up in front of him slowly.

"Do you really have a reason to go this far to protect the third princess?"

As if in response to William's action, Knight Leader began to move, too.

At the top of a huge tree, he silently and smoothly moved the dark-red Hrunting.

His subordinates were struggling on the ground down below and he saw one holding a bow in his shaking hands, but he did not look back in their direction.

"It's true that the kindness and morality that are at her core are worth mentioning. However, I do not think they are enough to move a nation. Basically, this is an issue of what policy will most effectively move the country. This is a question of whether a policy of military force or one of benevolence

will save Britain now, and there is only one answer. It seems Lady Carissa is worried about it, but I seriously doubt that the third princess could wield Curtana Original. Her personality would not allow her to and she also simply does not possess the ability."

"…"

"I am not saying that Curtana is everything, but you cannot deny that it is an effective means of military strength. We of the knights will always choose the option that is best for England. As long as that option is Lady Carissa with Curtana Original, then we will support her with everything we have."

Knight Leader's words suddenly cut off there.

A small laugh had cut him off.

The mercenary's shoulder's moved up and down slightly. However, his expression was not the wild smile Knight Leader knew to appear on his face when faced with a formidable enemy.

His smile was one of amusement.

"You seem to have a lot to say, my friend."

William Orwell rejected all of the words that had entered his ears.

His expression said the words had been so ridiculous they weren't even worth remembering.

"So you've come to the point where you cannot take up a sword and fight without making excuses to yourself and others."

No voice came in response.

With a loud noise, the mercenary and the knight kicked off from the tops of the trees and clashed in midair.

Their legs gave off so much power that the two trees they had been standing on were smashed to pieces.

William and Knight Leader had jumped straight forward from the large trees. They seemed to slide through the air as their display of strength twisted gravity and their bodies and swords relentlessly clashed at the halfway point.

Sparks exploded.

A seemingly never ending stream of shockwaves spread out.

The energy they had used to drive themselves forward was completely lost in the first strike and the mercenary and the knight began to fall directly downward. However, a free fall was no threat to those two. They continued to swing their swords in close quarters.

Their swords bit into each other complexly.

In a midair battle with no footholds, one could not properly use one's own weight to swing one's sword. Instead, William and Knight Leader used the energy gained from stopping their opponent's blows to rotate their body around and return the powerful blow from many different angles. This repeated again and again and again and again.

As they fell while entangled in such a complex manner, they looked somewhat like two gears.

But those gears were like industrial circular saws as their thick blades scraped against each other.

This 360 degree exchange taking advantage of the lack of footholds would not last forever. The ground was approaching and the instant they landed was a huge chance to get the upper hand in that competition.

That instant came soon afterwards.

Their feet made contact with the ground covered in undergrowth.

"!!"

"!!"

A thunderous roar sliced through the air.

William Orwell and Knight Leader’s bodies both moved about 50 meters from the center of the explosion. They seemed just like small pebbles blown away in a large explosion.

However, the two of them did not put that distance between themselves intentionally.

The instant they landed, they had come closer and closer and a full-strength strike had sent them sliding along the ground due to the combined force of the two colliding attacks.

The bottom of William’s shoes scraped along the ground making a horrible noise.

It was the noise of the undergrowth and even the black soil below being torn up. The route William had passed through was torn up so that it looked like a cleared path.

The battlefield had moved from the place where a large number of knights had collapsed due to the aftereffects of the battle. William’s back was almost touching the 100 meter wide slope he himself had created with the landslide that cut off the escape route. Opposite him, Knight Leader adjusted his grip on the dark-red longsword. William could not fall back any farther. This was not due to the thickness or the height of the wall. It was because crossing that wall was the same as surrendering the path that lead to the third princess.

There was something you could tell by looking at William.

He had already started to move his weight forward while holding Ascalon.

He looked just like someone about to start a sprint.

Knight Leader also looked as if he were on the verge of assaulting.

“So you are afraid for the third princess. On the battlefield, we have determined so many people were our enemy and slaughtered them. What good will wielding a sword for this reason do you now!?”

“How light. Those words are much too light for the surface!!”

“Heh. Are you trying to say that you can’t stand killing people who have agreed to surrender!? That may be just like you, but that’s all it is!!”

An explosive noise sounded.

Knight Leader charged toward William with his dark-red sword in hand and the mercenary responded in kind.

“And even so, you’re making an enemy of the military side to protect benevolence. Do you really believe that benevolence has enough value for you to support it this much!?”

Sparks and shockwaves scattered about and spread around while the two men moved at high speed.

Sword struck sword and the men glared at each other at close range.

“I do not need decorative words to speak to others.” William’s Ascalon pressed on Knight Leader’s sword. “The reason I fight is expressed with my body and my sword!!”

The mercenary purposefully drew back his sword and then filled the open space by forcefully striking Knight Leader’s dark-red sword with the blade. The tremendous shock threw Knight Leader’s balance off ever so slightly and William continued with a second attack.

However, the head of the knights was not one to be done in from just that.

He swung his dark-red sword around to receive the blow and moved back instead of opposing the momentum.

A space of 10 meters opened up between them.

(…Most likely, this mercenary is fighting without a single military or political reason in mind. Whether the third princess is actually a princess or not holds no meaning to him.)

Knight Leader guessed at what was going on in his opponent’s head and poured more strength into the hand gripping the hilt of his sword.

Flere210. The one who changes the meaning of those tears.

As the magic name he held suggested, the reason he held his weapon was to transform cold tears into warm ones.

(But that's still too superficial. That reason is nowhere near enough to kill me, you failed mercenary.)

"…"

On one side, William had finally stopped moving and adjusted his grip on the hilt of his gigantic sword.

It was the spiritual item Ascalon

It was 3.5 meters long and weighed over 200 kilograms. The sword had the same effects as the sacred sword that appeared in a story based on a real legend and a magician had calculated out all the necessary values and created that sword that could theoretically slay a 50 foot dragon.

The sharpness of the double sided sword was not uniform. The thickness and angle of each part were adjusted so it could also be used like an axe, like a razor, or like a saw. It also had a can opener-like spike and a wire close to the blade like a coping saw on it which made one wonder if the magician who had made it had been drunk. Scales, flesh, bone, muscle, tendons, fangs, claws, wings, fat, organs, sinew, blood vessels, nerves. It seemed to have truly been designed with the idea of being able to cut through every part of a dragon using that one device.

On the other side, Knight Leader held a dark-red sword in hand.

It was the spiritual item Hrunting.

It was 3.9 meters long and its weight was unknown, but it probably didn't weigh much more than the longsword used at its base. The spiritual item held the same name as the magical sword used in the legend of Beowulf. Apparently, the sword became tougher and sharper from the blood of slain enemies that blocked ones path, but Knight Leader had most likely had Telesma act as the blood so that the a large amount could be compressed into it in order to give it a tremendous amount of destructive power. Already, the ordinary laws of physics did not apply

to the steel of the sword. It felt lighter than its original mass should, it was tough enough to not have received a single scratch from the strikes it had received from Ascalon, and – most importantly – it was so sharp that it would kill William instantly were a single strike to hit him.

(…So it works on idolatry theory just like the cross in the Christian church.)

In contrast to his violent actions, William calmly analyzed the situation.

(He's using Curtana and Hrunting, two swords that symbolize the United Kingdom, to further strengthen the ability to control different types of power within the country. …Hmph. I was wondering how his physical body was storing and using a mass of Telesma greater than the power held by the average Saint. To give his life to his sword and his country, he's just as devoted to the theory of the knights as ever.)

At that last thought, William's lips bent slightly.

Not noticing that, Knight Leader spoke.

"In a one-to-one battle, there is no need to hide anything. How about I explain the details?"

"That isn't something I expected to hear from someone who deceived the queen."

"The second princess's plan was effective, but I did not like every aspect of it. Well, I can give my mercenary opponent a short breather to get a grasp of my style."

"I see. But that won't be necessary," William denied him. "I know the trick behind it, but you are not an enemy who will be defeated just from that."

"That was fast," praised Knight Leader. "But it's too bad. Just once, I wish I could have fought you at your peak."

An odd noise split through the darkness of the night.

Knight Leader did not move a step from where he stood.

He merely casually swung Hrunting.

However, the distance meant nothing.

William had immediately dodged to the side upon hearing the sound, but he did not make it in time.

A wound was gouged into his left shoulder and even into his collarbone.

(…That wasn't Hrunting…!?)

That had clearly been a different type of attack than before.

Before blood could come spurting out, William had already adjusted his grip on Ascalon in his right hand.

"Did you know that the magic sword Hrunting in Beowulf is mysteriously never used in the battles pivotal to Beowulf's life?"

There was no noise.

Knight Leader charged towards William faster than the speed of sound.

He swung Hrunting to the side and William received the blade on Ascalon while only holding the sword in one hand. Despite that, the sound of something slicing through the air reached William's ears. In response to a strange chill, he swung his head to the side as hard as he could and a light wound appeared on his cheek.

"In Beowulf's battle against Grendel, he used his own strength, in his battle against the water sprite, he uses an old sword he found in the enemy's hideout, and in the final battle of his life against the dragon, he uses yet another sword."

At that point, Knight Leader made another move.

In order to evade, William had slightly lost his balance and Knight Leader pulled Hrunting back from Ascalon.

He then swung the long sword.

William received the blow with Ascalon, but his inability to support his weight due to having lost his balance and his single-handed grip on Ascalon caused his

body to become airborne.

With a tremendous sound, William Orwell flew through the air.

“There is a lesson in what I am telling you: you should always prepare multiple trump cards when your fate is in the balance.”

As Knight Leader’s lips moved, the mercenary’s body struck a large tree and the thick trunk broke.

Ignoring the snapping and cracking noises made by the collapsing tree, Knight Leader spoke.

“It seems this is the limit for a failed mercenary.”

Blood squirted from William’s left shoulder, but he still stood up with Ascalon in his right hand.

Knight Leader’s words rang in the mercenary’s ears.

“In a one-to-one battle, there is no need to hide anything. How about I explain the details?”

Part 4

Kamijou Touma had snuck aboard a freight train on the Eurostar line heading from London to Folkestone and was lying face down on the roof.

The train was moving very quickly. Kamijou didn’t know what the average speed of foreign trains was, but he doubted they normally moved at almost 300 kph. Due to power trouble in London, a slower diesel engine had been used, but the power must have come back up because it suddenly picked up speed.

It was late at night and probably near the time of the last train of the night, so there wouldn't have been many other trains out normally and – more importantly – a coup d'etat had broken out over the entirety of Britain meaning the normal rail schedule wouldn't be kept. The train was only able to move at that ridiculous speed because there were no other trains on the track.

"Mghghghghghhghghgghghhghghgghhgghgh!!"

The skin of Kamijou's face was subtly distorted due to the wind created by the 300 kph speed. The reason the knights inside the train couldn't find that amateur as he shivered in the cold was quite simple. They would never think that someone would be stupid enough to hide there.

That said, Kamijou hadn't gotten up on the roof because he had wanted to. Originally, he had hidden within the freight train. However, it had been too dangerous to stay in one place because he had to prevent the knights from finding him when they irregularly patrolled the train. To do so, he had been sneaking from place to place matching the movements of the knights. Before he knew it, he had been forced up onto the roof.

(Ahh, I've heard about illegal immigrants sneaking from Mexico into America by clinging to the walls or roof of a freight train. I wonder if it was something like this…)

Kamijou recalled a documentary he had seen in his dorm back in Academy City.

But for him, merely reaching his destination was not his goal.

(Index…)

Kamijou subconsciously gritted his teeth.

When the coup d'etat had broken out, Index had been travelling with the second princess who was said to be the one behind the coup d'etat. He had no idea exactly what kind of situation Index was in, but it was clear her situation wasn't one where her safety was guaranteed.

She held the knowledge of 103,000 grimoires in her head.

It wouldn't be surprising if someone who wanted to increase their battle ability

as much as they could tried to misuse that knowledge.

To be completely honest, he knew it wasn't a situation a single amateur should be heading into.

(…But it's not like I have to defeat the enemy leader and all the troops protecting her.)

Kamijou looked down at his right fist.

(I just need to strike at an opening and rescue Index. If that's all I need to do, this is better than heading for the enemy lines with a large group of people.)

Then Kamijou saw something at the very edges of his vision.

Looking over in that direction, he saw the top of a silver helmet at the connection between two of the freight train's cars. And the knight wasn't moving between cars. It looked like he was climbing the ladder.

(A patrol…? Shit, someone's coming up here!?)

The armored man was at the front of the car, so Kamijou hurriedly headed for the back. With the wind caused by the train's high speed pushing at his back, Kamijou moved back while sliding along the flat roof. He got a chill thinking about the fact that it was all over if he fell down onto the gravel flowing by at high speed as he jumped down to the small space between cars.

The connection between cars on the freight train was not made into a passageway like on public trains. Each car was isolated, so Kamijou had jumped down onto a small space surrounded by a metal handrail.

It looked like he could move to the next car by climbing over the handrail. With another chill heading down his spine at the sight of the rail and gravel moving by much too quickly below, he moved to the next car.

(Dammit. We're moving pretty quickly, so we should reach Folkestone before long, right?)

He cursed in his heart, but it would all be over if he was found whether they were 10 minutes away or 1 minute away. There was nowhere to run within the

train, and it would be difficult to deal with a large number of knights gathering in one spot with only a single right hand. He didn't know exactly how many were on the train, but the train was heading down there to transport additional military personnel to the second princess. It seemed likely that there were a hundred or two onboard.

(…Oh, crap. This is way beyond the level of a fight against some delinquents.)

Kamijou used both hands to slide open the train car door and slipped inside.

The cars in the area he was hiding in were truly being used as freight cars because they were loaded with equipment instead of personnel. A large number of swords and spears were casually piled up by category looking something like the bonfires seen in old stories. It was quite a frightening sight. They were not accessories for decorative suits of armor in some mansion. Each and every one of them was a true weapon that was there for the purpose of killing people.

(Even so…)

Kamijou sighed within the dark freight car.

He could not speak very much English. If each letter and word were pronounced distinctly like in an English textbook, he could probably understand some, but when local speakers spoke quickly while running words together or eliminating them to make things easier to say, he couldn't understand a thing.

Even so, he had picked up on the fact that the knights onboard the train seemed almost panicked about something. It seemed some kind of emergency had sprung up. He couldn't pick up on the details behind it, but he felt like they kept saying a certain name again and again.

(William, huh?)

He had a feeling that that was a rather popular Western name and he couldn't think of anyone he knew with that name. He was willing to bet there were a lot of people in England named that. He guessed that the person might be a Necessarius magician and then decided that thinking any more on it wasn't going to help anything.

Then…

“Hey.”

Hearing that sudden voice come from the depths of the car, Kamijou thought his heart would stop.

It was a girl’s voice.

He quickly turned around in that direction and saw something wriggling behind a pile of silver armor and helmets. It was a human. The girl had her hands restrained behind her back and had restraints on both her ankles.

(Wait, those clothes are…?)

Kamijou looked puzzlingly at the girl’s clothes that were almost like a lacrosse uniform.

(I think I’ve seen that outfit before… Is it popular in London right now?)

The girl then unconcernedly spoke to Kamijou.

“You don’t look like you’re with the knights and you don’t seem like a young apprentice either. Are you being transported after having been captured, too?”

Her voice sounded irritated, but he didn’t understand a word of her quickly spoken English.

She must have picked up on what Kamijou was thinking from his expression.

“Hm? Oh, I see. Sorry, sorry. It seems you’re Japanese, so I guess I should speak in your language.”

“Y-you can tell I’m Japanese…?”

“An Asian person who gets a disturbing thin smile on his face when he first meets you is always Japanese.”

(…Is that how a Japanese polite smile looks to them?)

Kamijou was feeling a tad dejected, but the girl didn’t seem to notice.

“Anyway, I’ll ask again: you aren’t with the knights, right?”

Kamijou didn’t know what the girl’s true motives were and he looked back at her face.

She looked about 15 years old and had white skin and blonde hair. Her hands behind her back and her ankles had restraints on them. The restraints were not modern handcuffs. They were something like the wooden board with holes in it that was used to restrain one’s head in a guillotine.

When Kamijou didn’t respond, the blonde girl frowned in displeasure.

“…Do you not actually know Japanese? Or is my pronunciation that bad?”

“N-no, I understood you. I understood you, but…”

“Oh, I see. My name is Floris. I’ve taken part in a bit of a fake magic cabal, but…that doesn’t really matter now. Just give me some help.”

Part 5

William Orwell had a 5 cm deep gash in his left shoulder.

Quite a bit of blood was flowing from the dark red wound. Ignoring his weakened left arm, the mercenary held his gigantic sword in only his right hand.

He was a little less than 10 meters from Knight Leader.

At that distance, each could attack the other in an instant, but Knight Leader did not move a step.

He sliced his dark red sword through empty air as if he were taking the situation lightly.

“!!”

A horizontal cutting attack came from a completely different angle and threatened to behead William.

When William bent over to dodge the attack, a number of flashes glittered in straight lines around him.

Immediately afterwards, Knight Leader moved his longsword like a baton and invisible cutting attacks rushed towards William from all directions. The undergrowth was sliced in straight lines, claw scratch-like cuts ran across thick tree trunks, leaves floating in the night sky were sliced in half one after another.

William either recognized it in the sound of the wind, identified it in some other way, or used some kind of sixth sense to gather all the not yet classified information because he swung his head to the side, jumped back, swung his right arm to receive the attack on Ascalon’s thick blade, repelled the attack, and kept out of the range of Knight Leader’s deadly attack.

A storm of sparks erupted.

While swinging his large sword at supersonic speeds to protect his back without really turning around, William spoke to his slightly distant enemy.

“I’m sure you didn’t really think you could easily kill me just by adding a trick into your attack range.”

“…Once again, you catch on quickly. And as usual, you make sure to say nothing more than is necessary to a detestable extent.”

Knight Leader’s face held a bitter expression as he swung his dark red sword around at a high speed.

He was using a pattern.

In the stories of Norse, Celtic, Charlemagnic, and Germanic warriors and knights, many legendary weapons were spoken of, but a certain pattern existed in all those weapons.

“I mastered the many paths of knighthood and thought I would compensate for

each one’s weakness by unifying them, but it seems the more complicated the combination gets, you have to simplify it down to a single strike. I suppose it is similar to the demise of a star like the sun. When a star grows too large, it finally explodes and gives birth to a black hole. …It becomes a mere gravitational field. It becomes something that is theoretically simple but still produces a great power.”

It was a single strike born from combining all sorts of spells.

As such, magically interfering with it or cancelling it out was incredibly difficult. To find the solution, one had to head down every one of the paths Knight Leader had taken.

“However, this is not the kind of complete demise that turns the star into a black hole. There are many ways for a star to meet its demise. If the star’s mass is not at a certain level, it can apparently turn into other things such as a neutron star or an interstellar cloud. It seems my strike gained the characteristic of the sword due to this imperfection.”

Knight Leader’s slim fingertips tightly held his dark-red sword.

“Theoretically, this level of characteristic can be divided into a few categories instead of being lumped together in a single category. Simply put, there is the Slicing Power that can cut through anything, the Weapon Weight that creates tremendous destructive force, the Enduring Solidity that cannot be destroyed, and the Movement Speed that makes no one able to catch up to me. There is also Special Use, a rare pattern necessary to slay particular monsters, Precise Accuracy that automatically has me move toward the vital points, and the pattern I just used against you.”

“…The Attack Range, you mean?”

He had reanalyzed the laws behind the Norse Gungnir and Mjölnir, the Celtic Fragarach and Brionac, and other weapons, combined them, and then condensed them. His evolution had constructed completely new spells much like a black hole being created from the death of a star that grew too large.

And the similar legends from around the world other than the European ones that Knight Leader loved and so put into his spell could also be added into the birth of this black hole.

“I realized something when I reanalyzed all the spiritual items and weapons from various cultures and legends in order to create this Attack Range. I realized that all kinds of humans wish to win by unilaterally pouring powerful attacks on their enemy from a position their enemy’s attacks cannot reach. I do not like giving affirmation to that boring society of guns, but I cannot deny that it is quite effective.”

(And the actual materials he used to make this a reality are…)

“Heh!!”

William used Ascalon to repel a “long range” strike approaching his temple from the side. A blade that looked like dark red rust only a few millimeters long struck the thin wire held on like a coping saw creating sparks and then pierced into a nearby tree trunk.

“It is a fragment of the sword.” Knight Leader easily revealed the trick that he should have kept hidden and continued swinging around his sword. “The fragments of some excellent weapons and spiritual items still display the power of the original. For instance, the sword used by King Charlemagne had the fragment of a sacred spear inside it.”

“So someone who is about to fight against France is using the legend of one of its kings?”

“That was a surprisingly pointless comment coming from you.”

Knight Leader grinned.

Guided by his sword, a few dozen blades of rust targeted William.

“I will use anything I can. If you want to go down that path, even the name ‘Curtana’ comes from a French word. I believe it means ‘short sword’ due to its broken off tip.”

Suddenly, Knight Leader stopped moving his hand.

William looked on suspiciously.

“Don’t get that look on your face.” Knight Leader readjusted his grip on

Hrunting. “I told you I did not like giving affirmation to that boring society of guns. A proud knight has sworn to crush his enemy while allowing the enemy to use all his strength.”

“Are you planning on turning your sword on even powerless servants to boast of that pride?”

William Orwell clicked his tongue slightly.

A red flash of light shot from Ascalon as he held it on his right hand.

No. The light was not just one color. From each angle of the blade, the shine changed just like with the surface of a CD.

Strictly speaking, even that wasn’t accurate.

The 3.5 meter long sword did not have just one blade. Its thickness and angles changed and it had a portion like an axe, a portion like a razor, and a portion like a saw. It also had a can opener-like spike and a wire close to the blade like a coping saw.

Ascalon’s shine originated in those different functions.

The color changed depending on how and where the different methods of attack would be used. The axe-like blade was red, the razor-like blade was blue, the can opener-like spike was green, and the coping saw-like wire was yellow. Like that, magical power was being supplied and converging on each of the sections of the spiritual item. The real time regulation of what would provide the greatest destruction decided on the color of the light that split between the routes of each blade.

“I had hoped I wouldn’t have to use this.”

“That isn’t like you. Were you holding back against one who the dragon symbolizes?”

Knight Leader smiled and gripped Hrunting’s hilt.

In the values of the Christian Church, the dragon was the symbol of more than one thing.

For example, it represented pagans and foreign invading forces.

It also represented *a fallen angel stained with evil*.

Part 6

Inside the freight train, Kamijou Touma faced a girl with her hands and feet restrained.

It seemed her name was Floris.

Someone familiar with the full story of the recent events might immediately have the organization name “New Light” come to mind. Kamijou did not know the names of the New Light members other than Lessar who had been terribly injured before his eyes nor did he know what they looked like.

“C’mon, quit standing there with that blank look on your face and help me already.”

“Help you…? How?”

“Surely you can figure that out just by looking at me. Help me take these off.”

She thrust forward the wooden restraint binding her ankles.

A look of displeasure came over Kamijou’s face.

“…What the hell did you do to get those things put on you?”

“Well, I don’t really think I did anything wrong.”

Floris laughed.

She then whispered something quickly in English.

“(…I was kinda glad the knights had rescued me from the Necessarius sanctuary, but then they threw me on this freight train without removing the restraints. They really must have been planning on silencing us from the beginning. Dammit Bayloupe, this is what happens when you trust public servants like the knights. I’m not willing to bravely have my life come to an end for just one mission like Lessar.)”

“Hah?”

“Oh, nothing. Anyway, you’re in a similar situation, right? Like you got on the knight’s bad side and were taken in or something.”

“I snuck onto the train to get to Folkestone.”

That response had a lot of meaning behind it, but Floris did not respond to it.

She had only needed to know that he wasn’t with the knights.

“Anyway, just help me get these off. Due to the effects of the spiritual item, I can’t leave this 2 meter square area. That means…well…I can’t grab the key on the wall over there.”

“Ahn? Is that all you need?”

Kamijou started to reach for the ring of keys on the wall, but then he froze.

A puzzled expression appeared on Floris’s face.

“What is it?”

“Well, my right hand is known as Imagine Breaker. To put it simply, if the key you need is magical, it’ll be destroyed the second I touch it. If that happened, there would be no way of removing your restraints.”

After his own explanation, Kamijou suddenly looked up.

“Huh? But then we don’t have to deal with the key at all. I can just destroy the magical restraints directly with my right hand.”

“Hah? Eh? Wait, wait, wait!! I don’t know what you’re planning to do, but-….!?”

As Floris complained, Kamijou grabbed the restraint around her ankles.

With a cracking noise, the restraint fell to pieces.

“See? I should’ve just done this from the beginning.”

“H-huh…”

Kamijou circled behind Floris and destroyed the restraint binding her arms.

“There we go. Ha ha. You’d better be really damn thankful, Floris-kun.”

“Gwaah!? Wait, destroying the restraints that crudely will-…!!”

An alarm began to sound within the train car.

The two of them could sense presences gathering at the front and back of the car. Then they heard physical armor-sounding footsteps clanking.

Floris glared at Kamijou with deathly bloodshot eyes.

“Wh-what are we going to do!? We’re going to be at a complete dead end 10 minutes after this begins!!”

“N-no, it’s too soon to give up!!” Kamijou replied as he headed for the iron door.

In addition to the doors at the front and back of the car, it also had a large sliding door on the side wall for loading. Kamijou removed the latch and used both hands to open the sliding door slightly.

A blast of wind roared into the car.

“Where are we?”

“Aren’t we almost at Folkestone?” replied Floris.

Hearing that, Kamijou looked back out the door and in the direction the train was headed. A green plain spread out before his eyes. However, one glance at

the ground quickly flowing along down below made it clear what would happen if they carelessly jumped out.

“Looks like we have to jump,” he said.

“Are you an idiot? You can commit suicide if you want, but I won’t!!”

“No, not that. We’re approaching a river! That’s the only place we can escape at!!”

“Eh? No way. Diving down into a cushion of water from a great height and miraculously surviving is just something from Hollywood. It isn’t going to work in reali-…”

“Let’s go. It won’t be as scary if we hold hands!!”

“E-eh? Wait, this is really gonna kill uuusssssss!!”

The freight train was crossing an old stone bridge.

Kamijou had grabbed Floris’s arm while she chattered on and jumped from the open sliding door.

They were roughly 10 meters from the water’s surface.

Perhaps out of fear, Floris was clinging to Kamijou’s body and she looked like she was about to burst a blood vessel as she shouted.

“We’re done for!!”

“No, we’ll be fine. The water will act as a cushion and-…!!”

“That river isn’t even a meter deeeeeeeeep!!”

“…….!!”

Kamijou’s eyes turned to dots.

He looked back up and saw a number of knights on the freight train holding longbows. However, their shoulders were relaxed and they looked completely dumbfounded. It was as if they were saying, “My duty says I should shoot them, but that would definitely be a waste of tax money.”

“Ahhh, dammit!!” Floris yelled in midair and her shoulders suddenly started to glow.

Something made of metal parts was attached there and a few thin metal rods like the frame of an umbrella jutted out on both sides seeming to ignore the law of conservation of mass.

“Grab on!! I’m going to try to somehow offset our speed with my wings!!”

A film of light sprouted out connecting the umbrella frame-like rods. Seeing the entire thing spread out like bat wings, Kamijou’s cheek twitched slightly.

(Umm, didn’t she hear me explain my right hand? If she’s trying to lower our speed by using magic, I sense some real misfortune headed my way.)

Part 7

Various colors of light glowed from Ascalon.

Knight Leader’s long sword was dyed in the single dark-red color that resembled

both blood and rust.

The distance between the two swords was less than 10 meters.

“Let’s go,” said William Orwell quietly.

“Come,” Knight Leader quietly responded.

With a tremendous roar, Knight Leader’s long distance strikes attacked William from all directions.

It was the Attack Range type of evolved strike that was constructed from analyzing the spells and spiritual items appearing in the legends of knights from various cultures, putting them together, and condensing them much like a star that grew too large and gave birth to a black hole. It was Knight Leader’s enveloping attack that thoroughly investigated every type of attack that unilaterally attacked the enemy from a seemingly impossible range combined with fired small rust-like sword fragments.

William used only his right hand to swing up his large 3.5 meter sword and then reversed his wrist in order to put the back of the sword in front of him.

The blade glowed crimson.

Crimson indicated the axe.

The mercenary’s attack was fired in a straight line directly down and was not intended to repel the attacks flying in from all directions.

He was aiming for the ground.

With a loud impact, the solid earth below shook.

An area with a radius of 20 meters with William in the center sank deep down. This included where Knight Leader stood and the innumerable strikes he had fired sliced through the air above the head of the mercenary who had sunk down about 3 meters.

“Wha-…?”

Either because his sure-fire attack had missed or because his footing was unstable, Knight Leader's movements dulled slightly.

It only lasted an instant.

However, William Orwell swung up the blade that was pointing straight down and used his bent over posture to its fullest by explosively stretching his tightened muscles in a charge towards Knight Leader.

The explosive sound of his footsteps came after a slight delay.

The already slipping ground was utterly destroyed.

Ascalon's glow turned from red to blue. William reversed the double-edged sword with his wrist again in order to bring the thin and sharp razor-like section to the front. He then swung the sword horizontally right in front of Knight Leader so as to slice him in two.

It was as if he were nonverbally saying that Attack Range was no problem for him and that a trick like that would not determine the victor.

However…

"I do not recall saying that Attack Range is the only pattern I can use, you failed mercenary."

There was no sound.

Knight Leader merely disappeared from before William's eyes.

Even with his level of kinetic vision, he had been unable to keep up with the enemy's movements.

"Movement Speed," said a voice behind him.

Feeling approaching wind pressure, William stabbed his large sword back below his arm without turning around.

The sound of steel clashing with steel rang out.

Perhaps because of the posture he had attacked from, William felt a dull pain run

through his wrist.

Ignoring it, the mercenary spun his entire body around.

The blade's color changed from blue to green. He turned his wrist to turn the back of Ascalon's blade to the front. He attacked Knight Leader who had gotten behind him with the can opener-like spike.

"Weapon Weight."

He was met with an unexpected shock.

He was assaulted with a recoil even greater than when he had received the attack from an unstable position before. William's body was thrown backwards like he had tried to stab a shovel into a boulder as hard as he could.

The mercenary's feet slid along the black soil.

A mere 3 cm was all it took to prepare.

In that time, Knight Leader swung his dark red sword up above his head.

"Slicing Power."

"!?"

With an eerie sound, William gave up on trying to block the attack.

He immediately jumped back to get some distance between them.

He avoided Knight Leaders' blade by a few millimeters and the blade made contact with the black soil.

The solid earth was split open.

William had to hurriedly jump to the side so as not to be swallowed up by the rift.

And then…

"Attack Range."

An unpleasant noise exploded out.

William Orwell’s side was lightly cut.

By creating that phenomenon, Knight Leader had proven what he had said.

He could use more than just Attack Range.

He also had Slicing Power that could cut through anything, Weapon Weight that created tremendous destructive force, and Movement Speed that made it so no one was able to catch up to him. Although they hadn’t been seen yet, he most likely also had Enduring Solidity that made the sword unable to be destroyed, Special Use that was necessary to slay particular monsters, and Precise Accuracy that automatically had him move toward the enemy’s vital points.

By condensing the legendary spiritual items and spells appearing in the Norse, Celtic, Charlemagnic, Germanic, and other warrior and knight cultures and then condensing them further, he had simplified them down into attack patterns. And by making them his own, he could freely use them as means of attack.

“You are going to die,” quietly reported the man holding the dark red “weapon” as he looked at the blood flowing from William.

What Knight Leader held was no longer Hrunting.

It wasn’t even a sword.

“I have seen all you have. As you are now, you cannot overcome my blade.”

It was merely a weapon.

It was a tool that should not have been created that annihilated all of its enemies whether they were man or monster.

Its strike was overwhelmingly sharp, overwhelmingly heavy, overwhelmingly fast, overwhelmingly tough, and overwhelmingly long, it held specialization to slice in two even monsters that could not be pierced by swords, and it even led its aim towards the enemy’s weak point that would cause the most damage.

Previously, Knight Leader had compared his attack to the explosion of a star.

While everything up to that point had been like a star with insufficient mass that instead became a neutron star or an interstellar cloud, that attack should perhaps be referred to as the ultimate black hole born from a star that grows too large.

Attack Range and Movement Speed did not allow it to be avoided, Slicing Power and Weapon Weight did not allow it to be blocked, and Enduring Solidity did not allow it to be destroyed.

If Knight Leader went all out, he could end the fight in the next strike.

William Orwell would definitely be sliced in two.

Why had he not done so before?

Was it sentiment?

“Will you cast aside your sword and depart from England?” Knight Leader slowly moved the “weapon” that he held in both hands. “Or will you become one with the soil of England along with your sword?” The tip of his longsword pointed towards William who stood at a distance. “Choose. Which do you desire?”

The result was clear.

William was not unscathed. Due to the wound in his left shoulder, he had lost feeling in one arm, he was losing even more blood due to the cut in his side, and he could not use his full potential due to his defeat in Academy City.

If Knight Leader’s ultimate strike was exactly as he described, the mercenary had no way of winning.

As such, it was clear what he had to do.

“…I have one thing to ask you before I choose,” said William with Ascalon in hand.

Knight Leader frowned as the mercenary continued speaking.

“Do you truly think that this country will be saved if you support the second princess and kill the third?” That mercenary was not a talkative person, so there

was a reason he felt this was a necessary question. “The first princess is intellect, the second princess is the military, and the third princess is benevolence. …Can you assert that the one you chose and the ones you cut away were the correct ones?”

“…It is difficult to say that it was ideal,” said Knight Leader with a sigh.

Even so, the glint in his eyes did not waver.

“However, history has already begun to move. As time cannot be reversed, I must choose one of the camps. And I choose the most beneficial camp.”

“I see,” muttered William.

He moved.

He placed his bloody left hand back on Ascalon’s hilt to join his right hand. The white cloth wrapped around it to prevent his hand from slipping was dyed red almost instantly.

“Have you made your decision?” asked Knight Leader remaining motionless. “Have you decided whether you will run or die?”

“No,” William Orwell rejected those options. “My two options are to cut you down or to not cut you down.”

“…I see. It seems you have made your decision.”

Knight Leader sighed.

He wouldn’t directly say it, but William’s goal was most likely to rescue the third princess.

The mercenary’s retreat would more or less guarantee the complete success of the invasion and suppression of the United Kingdom that would lead to the third princess’s execution. As he was her final fortress, it was hard to imagine him fleeing.

“So you truly will not leave.”

“There is no point in speaking,” William immediately responded to Knight Leader’s words.

The head of the knights clicked his tongue.

“To be frank, I cannot stand having to execute Third Princess Villian and I do not like some of Second Princess Carissa’s methods.”

“…”

“However, Lady Carissa has already begun her revolution. Every one of this country’s knights knows that she is not someone that can be stopped by mere words.”

The battle was already over.

Holding a sure-fire attack in his hands, Knight Leader spoke some final words to the mercenary.

“Now that history has begun to move, we cannot act lightly. If this revolution remains a civil war for too long, the United Kingdom’s overall power will fall and external enemies will be able to easily defeat us using that opening.”

This was all in accordance with the chivalrous nature of showing mercy to the weak.

The reason the head of the knights wielded his sword lay there from beginning to end.

“To save this country, we must sheathe our weapons and construct a new order. The real problem is who will stand at the top. If that position goes back to her majesty the queen, we cannot escape this crisis. As such, someone else must take the throne. Between the intelligent first princess, the militaristic second princess, and the benevolent third princess, the answer is clear.”

“Pathetic,” spat out William Orwell. “Do you really think you can pile unnecessary phrase upon unnecessary phrase and fill in the pit of your barbarity with the word ‘justice’?”

“And are you still not going to speak?”

“Is it really something I need to say?” said the mercenary as he ignored his wound-covered body.

The head of the knights guessed what the words that would come next would be and spoke.

“So you want to ask me what would happen if the military acted without benevolence? My response is that there is no absolutely correct order of precedence here. We merely decided which card we will choose.”

William held his large sword that held numerous methods of attack and had the knight’s crest brazenly displayed on the side.

“I see. However, I have already indicated what my reason is.”

“What?”

“Hmph. It too is something that does not need to be said.”

He did not need any chance of victory.

The mercenary gathered more strength in his hands gripping the hilt of the large sword that was dyed in his own blood and glared directly at the head of the knights.

(That is the type of man he was.)

Knight Leader narrowed his eyes slightly and swung his sword up so the forward pointing tip was pointed straight up.

His ultimate strike contained Slicing Power, Weapon Weight, Movement Speed, Enduring Solidity, Attack Range, Special Use, and Precise Accuracy.

“In that case…”

Knight Leader did not hesitate.

He gave his final words to his old friend of an enemy.

“If you will not retreat, you will die.”

They both moved simultaneously.

The explosive noise of a shockwave cut through the dark night.

William Orwell ran.

He ran only forward.

Using all the power he had, he moved in close to his enemy as quickly as he could.

On the other hand, Knight Leader’s single step was not taken to move.

He shifted his weight and swung his sword down using both hands with all his might.

He did not need to run up close to his enemy.

Just by swinging his sword down, he fired off his strike that contained his enormous Attack Range. His overwhelming Movement Speed did not allow one to evade, his overwhelming Slicing Power and Weapon Weight did not allow one to defend, and his overwhelming Enduring Solidity did not allow his sword to be broken.

It was a certain kill.

And Knight Leader mercilessly swung down his longsword the instant before the mercenary reached him.

The sound of the air being sliced reverberated throughout the area.

Immediately afterwards, a slicing attack much too long for the sword that had produced it rushed down on William from above. The mercenary reacted immediately by bringing Ascalon above his head.

The two strikes clashed and were repelled.

Knight Leader’s attack that should have been a certain kill had been stopped.

“!?”

(…There is nothing here that is worth saying.)

William thought as he ran.

(A certain kill with overwhelming sharpness, weight, speed, toughness, and range. …If he was really using something like that, I wouldn't have gotten off with just a gash in my shoulder!!)

That's right.

It was true that Knight Leader could freely use Slicing Power, Weapon Weight, Movement Speed, Enduring Solidity, Attack Range, Special Use, and Precise Accuracy as methods of attack.

However, *William had never seen him use more than one at a time*.

In other words, he could only use one pattern at a time. If he gave precedence to Slicing Power, Attack Range would fail and if he gave precedence to Attack Range, Weapon Weight would fail. Because each one of Knight Leader's attacks followed one of the directions to its limit, he could not use them at the same time.

The reason he had not carried out a "certain kill" yet was not because he was hesitating for some reason or another. On a true battlefield, he would have no reason to be unwilling to use his full strength.

Such a convenient ultimate attack simply did not exist.

As such, William had a chance of victory.

For a strike that gave precedence to Attack Range, the mercenary would be able to stop the attack!!

"Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!"

And then William had brought Knight Leader within range.

He swung his 3.5 meter sword horizontally.

"!? Movement Speed!!"

“Not enough.”

Knight Leader’s arm moved at high speed and he just barely managed to block the mercenary’s attack.

However, there was no weight or toughness behind it.

In response to the full strength blow, Knight Leader was knocked back a bit.

It did not result in even a second of lost time.

In that time, William turned the blade around with his wrist and focused on the spike near the base. He then swung Ascalon again.

The light turned white.

When large swords like the ones William and Knight Leader wielded were used in extreme close quarters, they were not as powerful. That sharp spike attached at near the base of the sword had been prepared to solve that problem. Most likely, its original purpose had been to rip the dragon’s thick nerves from its flesh using the principle of leverage.

William gathered his magic power in one point and its penetrating power increased even further.

If Knight Leader did not stop that attack, he would be defeated.

“Enduring Solidity!!”

“Too late.”

Immediately after William Orwell said that, the spike near the base that had been installed for close quarters combat slipped past Knight Leader’s defenses and mercilessly pierced into the right side of his chest.

He did it all to save the third princess who was being led around by the military coup d’etat and was to be executed despite having committed no crime.

A loud explosive noise rang out.

There were no longer any birds around to fly off in fright.

More than half of the trees in the surrounding forest had been blown away, so the birds and beasts had long since fled.

Part 8

Meanwhile, three people were hiding on a different train than Kamijou Touma had been on.

The three people were Agnese, Lucia, and Angelene.

The girls were on a normal ten car train heading from Edinburgh to London. The train was heading down a track that went straight from northern Britain to southern Britain.

However, as the other trains had all been stopped due to the coup d'etat, the train was flying along at a much faster speed than usual and heading right past the stations it would normally stop at.

A cold wind blew on Agnese Sanctis's cheek.

They were neither within the train nor on its roof. They were on the wall. Lucia specialized in blowing up a giant wooden wheel and attacking with the fragments, but she currently had the sharp fragments sticking into the aluminum wall to use as footholds and handholds.

Holding on like at a climbing wall, Agnese twisted her body in order to peek in a window. The car would have usually held a large number of students and company workers, but the only normal things inside were the bright fluorescent lights. However, there were tools for maintaining swords and armor inside as well as a communications spiritual item that all must have been brought in by the knights.

Seeing that, Agnese spoke while barely moving her mouth.

“(…It looks like they really are keeping the captured nuns in the front cars with the knights gathered in the back of the train.)”

Lucia and Angelene both nodded.

“(…So this is the midway point between them?)”

“(…I-if so, we might be able to rescue them without having to face the knights head on if we disconnect the cars.)”

Most of the nuns of the former Agnese Forces had been captured in Edinburgh. They had not been beheaded there either because they wanted to at least officially have an inquisition so it would be lawful justice instead of an unreasonable slaughter or because Second Princess Carissa wanted to eliminate a large number of old enemies during her coronation as queen.

Either way, the captured nuns did not have a good fate awaiting them when they arrived in London.

As such, it was clear what Agnese and the others had to do.

“(…Let’s get started. Sisters Lucia and Angelene, use your projectile weapons to attack the guards through the window.)”

By attacking the knights from outside the window, they could give the illusion that the train was being sniped from elsewhere. The knights would eventually detect the location of the “snipers”, but that wouldn’t be a problem if they finished things before that could happen.

“(…I will use the Lotus Wand to destroy the link between the cars and then directly attack the disturbed knights. You two cover me.)”

“(…P-please be careful. A preemptive surprise attack is one thing, but we don’t know if the three of us together can actually defeat a single knight in a frontal attack.)”

Angelene looked worried and Agnese was about to lightly strike her face, but she staggered while clinging to the wooden fragments and hurriedly grabbed

onto the stake again.

The three nuns nodded to each other and began to move.

Lucia and Angelene moved from wooden fragment to wooden fragment heading for the roof of the train. Watching them go, Agnese moved along the wall to the back of the train car. She was heading for the link between the cars.

“Tutto il paragone. Il quinto dei cinque elementi. Ordina la canna che mostra pace ed ordine. (In accordance with all things. The fifth of the five elements. Open the crosier that symbolizes peace and order.)”

Her weapon, the Lotus Wand, was bound to her shoulder with a rope.

As those words came from her small lips, the wings of the crouched angel statues on the end of the wand opened up like a flower.

“Prima. Segua la legge di Dio ed una croce, Due cose diverse sono connesse. (First idol. In accordance to the laws of the son of god and the cross, link a different object with a different person.)”

When Agnese had gotten near the link, she held onto one of the wooden fragments stuck in the wall using one hand and used the other hand to grip the Lotus Wand.

Her wand ignored distance and directly struck the air itself. The destructive force of the spell was dependent on the strength with which the wand was gripped. In other words, it was dependent on Agnese’s strength.

(Of course, I don’t think I can tear apart a steel connection with the physical strength of my arm.)

She looked down at the gravel flowing by at high speed below her feet.

(If I press the wand against the ground and use the power of the momentum of the train against the connection point, I should be able to destroy it.)

She twisted her body slightly to check the coordinates of the connection and then slowly lowered the bottom of the wand towards the gravel.

Suddenly, the door to the connection area opened and a man in silver armor came out. Agnese was mostly clinging to the automatic door in order to get close to the connection and she franticly tried to hide herself, but it was too late.

However, the communications spiritual item that had been left in one of the seats made a small noise. The knight was in a spot where he would notice Agnese if he turned his head even slightly, but he hurriedly ran toward the spiritual item.

He spoke while listening to the communication.

“That Imagine Breaker snuck aboard the freight train heading for Folkestone? Damn him. Is he planning on retaliating against Lady Carissa?”

“(…Nice one, boy! I love you!!)”

Agnese gestured toward Lucia and Angelene who were waiting on the roof giving them instructions and changed where she was aiming the Lotus Wand.

At the same time as the train’s automatic door was blown away, the roof above the knight’s head collapsed. The knight franticly tried to draw his sword, but the three of them all focused their attacks on him.

Despite the 3 surprise attacks from 3 different directions, the knight still managed to block both Lucia and Angelene’s attacks.

It was foolish to think one could win in a frontal attack against a member of the knights who was borrowing power from Curtana Original and the All-English Continent.

That was why Agnese did not attack the knight himself and instead attacked the floor below his feet.

“…!?”

The knight’s immediate response may have helped her. A normal human would not have been able to step through that floor, but that silver armored foot broke through it like it was made of Styrofoam.

Of course, that was not enough to defeat a veteran knight.

(Not good. If I apply any more power, this car itself will be broken in half and the Anglican prisoners kept in the front cars will slip from our fingers!!)

To think through that much in an instant and immediately stop moving, the knight must have been fairly clever.

The dull noise of an impact reverberated throughout the car as a strike from Agnese's Lotus Wand ignored space and mercilessly attacked the knight's body. Ignoring the presence of the thick armor, it directly struck his flesh-and-blood body.

It hit him in one of a human's weak points.

Specifically, it hit the knight's crotch.

Like the moment after two samurai exchanged iai strikes in a historical drama, the knight remained motionless for a few seconds.

Finally, he muttered a few words.

"…That was an unchivalrous attack…"

It must have been due to the effects of Curtana and the All-English Continent that he did not collapse after that single strike.

Giving a snort, Agnese Sanctis puffed up her chest and gave her rebuttal.

"Yeah, well I'm a nun!!"

That unpleasant noise of an impact could be repeatedly heard coming from the same spot and the knight's armor trembled. Due to his helmet, his expression could not be seen, but it would most likely have been quite a sight to behold.

"Hm, it seems my attack is the most effective because it ignores distance. I can just directly strike the flesh and blood body within the thick armor," Agnese said as she poked the motionless knight with the wand to see if he would still attempt to resist.

"Ah wah wah wah wah!" yelled Angelene as her face turned bright red. Perhaps to turn her focus elsewhere, she headed for the communications spiritual item to

intercept some of the knights' information.

"U-umm…It seems that spiky-haired boy escaped the freight train with a female magician from New Light."

Lucia sighed.

"Really, what is going on? Although I suppose that's more or less business as usual for that boy."

"A-and it seems they failed in diving into a river, struck the water's surface, and floated downstream where they happened to run into Third Princess Villian who was also fleeing. The knights are pursuing the three of them."

"What kind of situation is that!? The Japanese Momotaro!?" Lucia snapped back and Angelene's shoulders shuddered.

"D-don't ask me… S-Sister Agnese, can't you say something, too….Eee!!"

When Angelene looked back in Agnese's direction, she let out a scream.

She saw Agnese trying to get more information out of the defeated knight by force. She was moving the Lotus Wand in a rather questionable manner.

"Oh. So you like being struck more than being caressed? Ah ha ha. What are you trying to tell me with that twitching body of yours? Oh, what's this? You react here, too? You seem to be much more sensitive here. Hee hee hee. A gentleman like you feels good having someone mess with his hole? What a pervert. How about I stick this wand all the way up there directly?"

"G-gyaaaaahhhh!! S-Sister Agnese is in her full-blown naughty mood!!"

"…Sister Angelene. Why is this surprising you now? Sister Agnese was acting like this in the incomplete Orsola Church during the Book of the Law incident."

"Y-yes, b-but…I thought Sister Agnese was actually a lovely pure maiden!! I thought being seen naked by that boy was a new thing for her!!"

"Yes. Sister Agnese is the type of person that loves to flip up others' skirts but hates having her own skirt flipped up."

“Th-that’s horrible!?” said a flustered Angelene.

“…I recall you doing something similar,” said Lucia with a sigh of exasperation. “We should probably stop her soon. That may merely be a method to gather intelligence with no love or lust behind it, but it looks like that knight is going to fall into depravity if we don’t stop it now.”

“C-can we really stop Sister Agnese now that she’s this far gone!?”

“Returning her to her senses is simple. Don’t you remember what I just said?”

Lucia stared at Agnese’s ass while Agnese was too lost in operating the Lotus Wand to notice their conversation.

“Sister Angelene. This is a job for you. As I said, Sister Agnese is the type of person that hates having her own skirt flipped up.”

Part 9

Two silhouettes appeared in the dark night.

One was William Orwell.

The other was Knight Leader.

The two stood perfectly still, despite having moved here at beyond the speed of sound. Knight Leader's longsword, having failed its defense, became awkwardly rooted in mid-air; William took the spike at the base of his greatsword and drove it past Knight Leader's defenses and into the right side of his chest.

The spike fitted on the back of the grip wasn't in the same size range as a nail.

Matching the greatsword's full length of 3.5 meters, the spike was practically a stake.

Realistically, even if the attack wasn't instantly fatal, the right ribs must have been pulverized.

The two faces hidden by the darkness were mirrored.

One was in anguish.

The other was aloof.

However,

the expression of anguish belonged to William,

and it was Knight Leader who was aloof.

While William's strike wasn't meant to be fatal, its destructive force should have been enough to ensure that Knight Leader became immobilized.

But in truth, there wasn't a single wound on him.

The spike which should have been rooted into his chest hadn't even penetrated the cloth of his suit, let alone draw a single drop of blood.

The unnatural sponge-like sensation naturally brought an expression of doubt to William's face.

(The impact was displaced... no, that can't be. Is this...?!)

"Do you know of a Norse warrior called Thororm?"

Knight Leader spoke without a change in his expression, as the spike continued to push against his chest.

"He used a magic which had the power to reduce the sharpness of an enemy's blade to zero. Thus, no attack could harm him, while Thororm's would be the only sword which could cut at the opposition."

"You, mean..."

"I have constructed a technique by which I can reduce the offensive power of any and all armaments I recognise as such to zero. And I will let you know, that it makes no distinction between science or magic. Theoretically, it can neutralise even a nuclear weapon. As for those against which it has been proven... yes, it should be able to handle something on a level similar to the slashing attack wielded by the Saint of the Far East, designed to fight divinity."

Knight Leader slowly shook his head.

I told you that I had prepared multiple trump cards, he continued.

"It is effective against each weapon for ten minutes at best. Of course, there is no need to consider arrows and bullets once they have fallen to the ground, and bombs would not suddenly explode ten minutes after their first attempt failed, though that would necessitate the prevention of any further 'explosive triggers' - not that this relates to you. In any case, I have simply created a grace period of ten minutes... but you should know well what end awaits one who presents that much time to his enemy on a true field of battle."

Knight Leader glared directly at William.

"I was subjected to a terrible ambush at Dover, long ago - it was enough so that I wished to take measures against something like this."

"-!!"

Using his bare hands and seemingly holding the sword by the blade, William drew back Ascalon swiftly. Once he had opened some distance, he released several slashes, each in a different attack method.

The light was red - an axe-like thick blade to cleave at the sinews of the evil dragon.

"Turn to zero."

The light was blue - a razor-like thin blade to cut away at the fat of the evil dragon.

"Turn to zero."

The light was green - a churchkey spike in the blade to tear off the scales of the evil dragon.

"Turn to zero."

The light was yellow - a fretsaw wire nestled on the blade to disembowel the evil dragon.

"Turn to zero."

The light was purple - a giant saw on the back to severe the bones of the evil dragon.

"Turn to zero."

The light was pink - a hook spike attached to the pommel to pull out the fangs of the evil dragon.

"Turn to zero."

The light was white - a close-combat spike near the grip to gouge out the nerves of the evil dragon.

"That's already been turned to zero!! Are you quite done yet?!"

The series of booming noises suddenly ceased.

Ascalon, being swung at the closest possible distance, was seized by the bare hands of Knight Leader, like it was a styrofoam board. They glared at each other, as William put even more power into his grip of the greatsword with a grinding sound.

Knight Leader, standing atop an absolute advantage, readied his red-black sword with his other hand.

"This is the end."

Their gaze clashed in the minimum distance between the unmoving pair.

Knight Leader, while holding down the greatsword of the mercenary, said with a steady voice,

"Or you can forgo weapons and use magic - yes, in your case, you might be able to kill me with your runes or such. Perhaps you would like to try?"

His suggestion wasn't made seriously - his tone had conveyed that.

The speed of William and Knight Leader were equal. If he were to neglect the techniques which governed his body in favor of other kinds of magic, he would be quickly cut down and killed.

"This power was lent to me to protect England through the Original Curtana. A mercenary who would throw the country into chaos for his own sentiments without any thoughts of consequences, will never be able to kill me."

Knight Leader aimed his red-black sword at William.

Able to kill the mercenary with one more swing, he spoke again, at the last.

"Ascend to Heaven, together with the Third Princess."

"...You still don't know it yet?"

It was then that he heard these words spat out.

They were coming from the old friend and enemy before him.

"I hadn't thought that I would need to say this on purpose."

"What...?"

The doubtful Knight Leader then looked at the sword he had sealed with his own hands, Ascalon.

Or rather, he saw on its side - a coat of arms, fixed by metal.

"You - what are you thinking? What are you planning?"

"You're being a pest. Even now, you still ask with words?"

Hearing this, Knight Leader became even more dubious.

William Orwell was not a simple optimist. In a way, perhaps he was more

intimate with the tragedies of war than the one who had remained in England, Knight Leader himself.

A mercenary like that should understand - between 'military affairs' and 'human virtues', which strategy should be supported to better protect England. Eliminating Carissa to support Villian - with her mentality, they wouldn't be able to repel even France, the country which would become the spearhead of the Roman Catholic Church.

This man always had a core.

However, it was unthinkable that this road to destruction would be constructed on William's own steady heart.

Wasn't there something that Knight Leader was mistaking?

What was it that the mercenary called William Orwell was fighting for?

And again, he looked at the weapon wielded by William.

Or rather, to the escutcheon attached to the base of the sword.

(No...)

That coat of arms had originally been meant for when a certain mercenary was to be dubbed with knighthood.

In the end, that chance had been lost, and a white space would forever haunt the halls of Buckingham Palace.

(It can't...)

The shield was split into four and painted in blue with various patterns.

Above that were arranged three creatures in green - the Dragon, the Unicorn, and the Selkie.

(It can't be!)

Four sections and three creatures.

There was only one thing that these could represent.

(It can't be!!)

The blue foundation was England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The green creatures were 'the Royal Family', 'the Knights', and 'the Church'.

This coat of arms represented the complete harmony of the organization known as the United Kingdom.

For this mercenary, it was not a matter of killing who or supporting which.

His wish - disregarding both the Second or the Third Princess - was to combine the strength of the three sisters and the Queen.

"...Are you serious?"

Knight Leader groaned.

"Is that what you are really thinking?"

Against this, William Orwell's hard face loosened slightly.

As though he was saying, so your thoughts have finally reached that far?

"I've already said that there's no meaning in saying it."

"It's impossible."

"That doesn't matter."

Despite this situation of absolute despair, William replied with frightening ease.

"This is not a 'reason' covered by words, meant to be understood by millions. As you have said to me again and again, all along, this was just the personal sentiment of a worthless mercenary. I won't say that this should end with words. You simply need to act according to your beliefs, wordlessly."

"-"

Strangely, it was here that Knight Leader was lost for words.

On the other hand, as the mercenary had said, their swords would not be stopped here.

No matter how he thought about it, it was for the sake of England that they carried out this reform.

If the Second Princess didn't come into power during this dangerous situation, there was no telling how many enemies may advance upon them.

(...In the end, it doesn't change what needs to be done.)

They had both presented their reasons.

Words were not necessary.

One of them would win, and one of them would lose.

That was all there was in their world.

(However, now that you have lost all your weapons, you stand no chance.)

Knight Leader had already stopped Ascalon in his grasp, and his own sword was ready to cut down William at any moment.

Thororm's technique to reduce a weapon's offensive power to zero was only active for about ten minutes. His mission had to be executed before his powerful foe, William Orwell could recover his weapons.

"I will have to settle this now."

"That's true."

It happened right after this frank reply caused slight doubt to appear on Knight Leader's face.

Immediately, William Orwell put all his strength into Ascalon and pulled at the grip - only for that grip to abruptly slip out.

Knight Leader, now holding onto the blade of Ascalon temporarily bereft of power, felt his balance topple slightly.

(He destroyed it himself?)

Though he thought this, it was not correct.

Extending from William Orwell's grip was a blade over 1 meter long.

It was the last grand sword, hidden within the 3.5 meters long greatsword.

Normally, a part of the blade's steel would be imbedded within the grip (or it is caught between two sheets and used as the grip) and then kept in place by screws or wedges, to prevent the blade coming off the hilt when it was swung.

For Ascalon, it was the opposite.

Stowed in the greatsword, nestled in the shape of the steel imbedded in the grip, was yet another smaller sword.

It was a trick only possible because of the sword itself being overly large.

And,

because it was hidden, Knight Leader did not recognize the sword.

William turned his back to him, as though trying to hide the sword behind his large frame. And from that stance, he twisted his body at a high speed, releasing a blow on a horizontal track.

The air was cracked with a resounding woosh.

"?!"

For the first time, Knight Leader's expression changed. He had moved back with all his might; his suit was ripped, and a wound like a straight line ran across his chest. A spray of red liquid followed after.

Yes.

Wasn't the Thororm of Norse mythology killed by a hidden blade that came flying out from under a sleeve?

The words pierced his heart, heavier than nails.

His last resort, his continual fighting spirit, and his wordless strike.

Considering this the proof of William Orwell's legitimacy, Knight Leader involuntarily roared out.

"HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!"

It was not only Knight Leader who shouted.

William Orwell, the last grand sword in his hand - or perhaps this blade was the true core of the spirit weapon Ascalon - chased down the retreating Knight Leader, breaching his defenses.

Whether from his gouging wound, or his blood loss, Knight Leader's movements became dull.

However, it was not a fatal wound.

He still possessed two means.

Either to cleave at William's body with his red-black longsword,

or to render William's sword powerless with Thororm's technique.

(Crush the sword.)

He made a prompt decision.

(Even if this mercenary is killed, if that sword which symbolizes his conviction remains, it won't be my victory!)

Because he believed in his own justice,

he would not settle for an easy retreat, but instead would completely trample

over the justice of his foe.

Ignoring the pain of the shallow wound in his chest, Knight Leader moved to crush William's last weapon. If he could manage this one stroke, afterwards it would become a one-sided offense in his favor.

"Turn to zer-!!"

The mouth that tried to speak, stopped.

There was no blade in William Orwell's hands.

Both his hands were on the grip, but the blade which should have been above that wasn't there.

(Wha... where?!)

The technique of Thororm which Knight Leader controlled could select as a target any object he recognized as a weapon, and turn its offensive power to zero.

Reversely, it could not interfere with weapons that could not be recognized as such.

It was then that he saw a glitter, something shining.

Extending from the sword grip William was wielding was an extremely small wire. And the mercenary's thumb was touching a button-like object on the grip.

(He shot it upwards?!)

Most likely, he would have relied on Knight Leader missing the timing of the strike, connecting the blade to the hilt again by rolling up the wire, and releasing a second strike.

While it surely would have dealt great damage to him had it succeeded,

(It is over once I have discovered it! Turn to-!!)

Just as he shifted his gaze from William directly before him to above his head, something moved in the corner of his eye.

It was a branch about 2 meters long, thick as a human arm.

Having broken and fallen onto the ground, William stepped on one of its ends, forcing it to stand up like a seesaw.

The blade from above, or the branch from below.

While they were both weapons, it didn't even need to be said which was more dangerous.

(You thought, that you can buy time?!)

Without hesitation, Knight Leader's gaze moved up.

He turned the offensive power of the grand sword that would fatally wound him, to zero.

(Now-!!)

Confident in his assured victory, he put more power into his two-handed grip of the red-black sword.

However, there was an abnormality.

The sword grip William held, and the small wire that connected it to its floating blade; something like tree sap came bursting out of what was strictly speaking a microscopic tube. Hardening like glue once it contacted the air, spikes flew out in every direction, and was reborn as a primitive club.

Yes.

It had changed to the weapon William Orwell cherished above all else, the giant mace.

"!!"

"!!"

(Will I make it?)

This was the final blow.

It would be his victory if he could hold against this attack; it would be William's if his attack could overcome him.

Knight Leader focused his attention on the giant mace closing in right before his eyes.

(Turn to zero!!)

The ruined mercenary swung his mace down with all the strength in him.

The master of the knights, with no thought of defense, answered him with a swing of his red-black longsword.

The two giant weapons clashed.

Boom!! A rumbling noise exploded.

The unpleasant oscillations of crushed flesh echoed across the surroundings.

At that instant,

in the last moment, Knight Leader's technique had exercised its effect.

The giant mace and stake that William Orwell wielded had its offensive power reduced to zero; even if it was a direct attack which surpassed the speed of sound, it was not in a situation capable of damaging Knight Leader at all.

Within the darkness, the two men became still.

Regardless of who saw it, the result would be obvious.

"...Hah,"

Knight Leader opened his mouth first.

He could freely control the 'pattern' of a weapon that appeared in mythology, using it as an attack method. For the final strike, what he chose was 'cutting power', the might to cleave everything apart. Against a blade which could rend the earth just by touching it, even if the opponent was a Saint, a direct hit would be fatal.

"Good grief, what a dull ending."

"..."

The mercenary did not reply to his words.

And then, Knight Leader's body quivered and swayed to the side.

William's mace was sunken into the side of his neck.

Or rather, the grip of the mace - and the sword.

Under closer scrutiny, it was a part of the mechanism which shot out the blade - the small clasp which secured the blade to the grip, and which had protruded slightly, buried in his neck.

Knight Leader could select anything he recognized as a weapon to be a target, reducing its offensive power to zero. Reversely, even if it was something right in front of him the entire time, as long as he didn't recognize it as a weapon, he could not interfere with its offensive power.

"It's been 10 years since we separated... I thought... I'd trained myself enough... but, it's just another ambush, like Dover, huh..."

His red-black sword, thrown off its path by William's attack, slipped from his hand and fell far away onto the group.

"Even so... to shame, a knight... what a, conceited man... Certainly, to have... added, my name... onto your coat of arms... of English unity..."

The match had been decided.

"Now, that I think about... you... were always, that kind of man..."

His body leaned further, and he fell onto the ground.

He wasn't dead.

Like being hit by the back side of a katana, he was knocked unconscious by the strike on the neck.

Even if he couldn't interfere with its offensive power, in the first place, Knight Leader wasn't so weak a man as to die from a single clasp. And William Orwell, knowing this, took it upon himself to decide the outcome of the last attack relying on that small clasp.

The reason was clear.

"After all, I'm just a shallow, ruined, rogue mercenary. Compared to you formal knights, I fight with much less restraint."

Alone, the mercenary muttered this.

"I'm sorry to say that, I didn't bring a suitable blade for cutting an old friend."

It was idle talk - rare enough for him.

Part 10

Kamijou Touma arrived at Folkestone.

He was shivering and soaking wet with river water, but he wasn’t about to complain about it. Perhaps from the tension of being right in the middle of the enemy lines, his senses had begun to dim.

(Dammit. Which way is the Eurotunnel terminal!? I hope Index hasn’t been taken from there…)

Kamijou stared into the darkness of the mountain forest road that had no street lights.

He had met the mysterious magician girl Floris and Third Princess Villian on the way there, but they were no longer with him. The three of them had run into an

Amakusa scout and the two girls had been taken in by the Amakusas. It seemed they had received information from Agnese that they were in Folkestone, so the Amakusas who had used a rescue seaplane to get to the area had sent out scouts to look for them. For some reason, Floris had yelled out “Y-you tricked me, you bastard!!” upon seeing the Amakusas, and Kamijou looked puzzled as he wondered what that had been about.

It seemed a powerful enemy named Knight Leader was in Folkestone protecting Second Princess Carissa. He had defeated a Saint like Kanzaki Kaori and his whereabouts were currently unknown.

They wanted to avoid a pursuit after the wounded Kanzaki and an important person like the third princess was there too, so the Amakusas had no choice but to choose an inevitable defensive battle. It seemed they were currently hiding to escape the knights’ search and then find an opening to get the rescue seaplane moving.

“We could always break formation and send a few people with you…”

When one of the Amakusas had told him that, Kamijou almost accepted the offer, but he had decided against it and thought through the situation calmly.

“No, you need to focus on the rescue plane. We can’t have Villian get captured again. And isn’t Kanzaki having healing magic cast on her? Instead of coming with me, you should get her back to the battle as soon as possible.”

“But…”

“After I save Index, how am I going to escape Folkestone? I’m telling you to guard the goal point. That makes me feel safer.”

By indirectly bringing them all together as a large group, he had finally got the Amakusa members to reluctantly understand. It seemed they didn’t like abandoning others.

Third Princess Villian was the top priority target for the knights.

It made sense to have all of the Amakusa’s strength focused on protecting her and Kanzaki.

(…Itsuwa's face was all red and the others were physically holding her back from going with me. She must have really wanted to save Index. I guess the two of them must have become friends during all that Acqua of the Back stuff.)

Kamijou had no problem thinking that, although that probably would have gotten him stabbed with a spear if Itsuwa had heard it.

At any rate, he was currently alone.

"…?"

Kamijou suddenly lifted his head up.

He had heard a noise.

Immediately afterwards, a shockwave like blast pounded at his ears.

(!? What…!?)

He rather pointlessly kneeled down and looked up.

However, he still couldn't see anything in the darkness.

He could tell nothing good would come of approaching whatever it was, but he couldn't save Index if he didn't charge in the direction of danger.

Kamijou slowly headed for the source of the noise.

He had been walking on a small paved road with fallen leaves on it. At some point though, it turned to a cracked and broken mess that was difficult to walk on. Even further along, the black soil was torn up and thick trees were knocked over.

As before, there were no street lights.

However, there was a light source.

"That's…?"

Something was about 10 meters ahead of him.

He thought it was a carriage.

On the front of the very old looking vehicle hung something that looked like a glass lamp with reflectors surrounding it on 3 sides. It might have been the predecessor to the flashlight known as a lamp. It seemed to actually be using fire instead of some kind of imitation. The light illuminating the darkness occasionally flickered.

However, that was not the only light.

Light was also being given off by sparks from clashing swords and steel suits of armor.

It was a true battlefield where human fought against human.

Looking closer, the carriage was not undamaged.

One of its four wheels was broken causing the carriage to lean unnaturally.

The battle was expanding out around the area of the broken carriage. Actually, it was perhaps wrong to refer to it as a battle. At the very least, it did not look like a battle between people who were evenly matched.

The numerous knights wearing silver armor were attacking from various angles.

In the center stood a man wielding a 3.5 meter sword.

Something happened, but Kamijou’s eyes could not follow it.

He could only tell that attacks and defenses had developed at an overwhelming speed resulting in great showers of sparks exploding from the silver armor and the knights being knocked far, far away.

One of them landed right next to Kamijou.

It hadn’t been a coincidence.

Without moving his head, the man standing in the middle stared at Kamijou just by moving his eyes.

A muscular body.

A blue outfit.

A gigantic weapon.

Seeing all those together, a chill ran down Kamijou Touma's spine. The feeling was nothing as vague as a foreboding. Danger signals erupted within Kamijou Touma due to his experience in Academy City's 22nd district when he had been driven to the very brink of death.

The cause of that experience stared Kamijou in the eye and spoke.

"Hm. Now that is a face it annoys me to see again."

"Acqua…of the Back!?" Kamijou yelled without thinking.

That large man wielded an exceptionally great power even for a member of God's Right Seat. He had been repelled once in Academy City, but that had been with the help of every Amakusa member as well as Kanzaki Kaori, a Saint. Even then, they had just barely won.

(He's…alive!? I thought he had blown up in the underground city's lake back then! Don't tell me he survived even that and then escaped Academy City!!)

In his confusion, Kamijou still managed to come up with a number of possibilities.

His stiffened body shook.

(But why is Acqua here? Is God's Right Seat trying to make this pain-in-the-ass coup d'etat even worse!?)

Kamijou didn't know why that man was there, but he definitely wasn't someone Kamijou could deal with on his own.

Kamijou gritted his teeth and muttered to himself not realizing he was doing so out loud.

"(…Dammit. And everything was bad enough with this coup d'etat. Just how much misfortune can be packed into a coincidence!?)"

“This is no coincidence,” Acqua responded to Kamijou’s muttering despite standing quite a bit away.

While Kamijou became even more cautious of the sharpness of the man’s senses, Acqua casually pointed towards the broken carriage.

“If your long term goal is to resolve this coup d’etat and your short term goal is to recover Index Librorum Prohibitorum, then there are a few points where the actions we must take are the same.”

“What?” said Kamijou as he turned his gaze in the direction Acqua was pointing.

Through the half-open door of the carriage, he saw a cloth that looked like the hood to a nun’s habit sticking out. It was not a normal hood. It was white with gold embroidery like a teacup.

“Index!!” he yelled, but no response came.

He wanted to run over to the carriage right then, but it was too dangerous to take his focus off of Acqua.

In contrast to Kamijou’s intense caution, Acqua seemed not to be all that interested in Kamijou. He indifferently turned his back on Kamijou and started moving from the carriage.

“If your goal is to recover her, you should do so quickly. In a way, this place is more dangerous than a conquered city like London.”

“…?”

Kamijou stared suspiciously at the God’s Right Seat member who was oddly lacking in hostility.

However, the situation did not stop there.

“Hm. From the look of things, I suppose Knight Leader was defeated,” said a sudden voice.

Kamijou and Acqua turned in that direction just in time to see a woman walk out from between some trees. She was a member of the Royal Family who wore a

basically red dress with red leather covering various areas. In her right hand, she held a sword with no tip or blade.

“I ordered him to bring me two heads while I was having this fit my hand, but he quits just from getting wounded? He does nothing but add to my troubles.”

She was Second Princess Carissa.

She was the leader of the coup d’etat.

“!!”

Kamijou put himself on guard, but the second princess was not looking in his direction.

She was staring at Acqua while slightly swinging Curtana Original.

“What a pain in the ass. With him gone, I have to deal with all the small fries myself.”

“Your troubles will soon be gone because this coup d’etat ends here.”

“Don’t underestimate me so much. Did you forget that I hold Curtana Original?”

The second princess smiled faintly while looking at Acqua hold up his giant sword.

He was not aiming for Carissa. He hit a nearby large tree with the side of the sword and used the shockwave to knock Kamijou away.

Meanwhile, Second Princess Carissa raised the strange sword above her head.

“This is a ceremonial sword that was originally used to cut the United Kingdom apart from the planet Earth and control everything within the kingdom. If I apply that special quality, I can even do this.”

She curtly swung down the sword.

In the next instant, *Kamijou Touma saw a dimension being severed for the first time in his life*.

Its range was a little less than 20 meters.

With a strange noise, something passed through along a line that Kamijou and Acqua had been on just a moment before. Something like a belt or a wall that was only about as wide as Curtana Original expanded. It was white and looked a little like a plastic model before it was colored. That object that looked not entirely complete appeared before Kamijou's eyes.

"I could feel it when I was practicing before. This spiritual item is quite old, but its disposition seems to change a bit when someone wields it based on modern military knowledge. …Well, I'm sure my mother would be able to do something similar because she has the same nature." A tone of enjoyment could be heard in Carissa's voice. "Did you know that the cross section you get by slicing a 3 dimensional object is 2 dimensional? And slicing a 2 dimensional object creates a 1 dimensional cross section."

With a clunk, the mysterious belt-shaped object that had been irrationally floating in the air fell to the ground right next to Kamijou.

It felt something like pottery, but it was actually extremely heavy despite how it looked. Even after it fell, it continued to sink into the black soil.

"Similarly, when a dimension higher than our 3 dimensions is sliced, the cross section appears in this world in a 3 dimensional form. As a result, the ruins of a cross section appears like this."

The second princess rested Curtana Original on her shoulder.

She was not attacking.

Even so, the dimension was sliced apart in the trajectory of her sword and a colorless belt-shaped object fell to her feet.

"This simultaneously severs every dimension at the coordinates whether they are higher dimensions or lower dimensions. It seems the only cross section objects created that we can perceive are the ones that can appear in a 3 dimensional world."

(What…?)

Kamijou was completely dumbfounded.

If what she was saying was true, that sword was a monstrous weapon that could cut right through dimensions which did exist but were more of a concept than anything. No matter how much steel someone used to protect his body, Curtana Original could cut right through the dimension to cleave him in two.

Even so, Kamijou did not feel any fear. The scale was simply too great. Apparently the universe was constantly expanding due to the big bang, but no one could concretely feel the universe expanding with their 5 senses. Second Princess Carissa was using a power on that level.

"*All Dimensions Severing Spell*."

Carissa spun Curtana Original around with a snap of her wrist and a smile slowly spread across her face as the ruins of the world that were the cross section objects spilled about.

"This is the first I've used this, but it's much easier to use than I expected. If it has a flaw, it's that it makes things too easy which takes some of the fun out of it."

Finally, Kamijou brought his brain out of its state of shock.

Second Princess Carissa was the leader of the coup d'etat.

He had had a proper conversation with her in Buckingham Palace and even laughed with her. He didn't want to get in a fist fight with her if he could help it, but it looked as if it would be difficult to end things with just a discussion. And if he screwed up, Index, who was unconscious in the carriage, would be in danger.

(…Dammit. I guess we'll have the discussion after we fight!!)

Carissa held up her sword that could slice through not just a manmade nuclear shelter but the earth and the universe itself.

Kamijou glanced over at Acqua.

Could he trust him?

Whatever anyone said, it didn’t change the fact that Acqua was a member of the Roman Catholic Church’s God’s Right Seat. But he had been fighting the knights led by Knight Leader before.

It seemed they had a common enemy.

Kamijou hesitated a bit, but it seemed he didn’t have time to think about it.

“Hey, can you buy me some time?”

“…”

Acqua frowned like usual when Kamijou spoke to him without taking his eyes off Carissa.

He ignored Kamijou, but the boy continued to speak.

“It looks like that dangerous cutting ability is only on the edges of the sword. The sides must be normal steel. You just need to hit that part with your sword to make her stagger for even a second. Then I’ll destroy that spiritual item with my right hand.”

“Oh, how scary,” Carissa said in a clearly mocking tone of voice. “If I remember correctly, that’s your patented Imagine Breaker.”

She stopped spinning Curtana Original around.

The flat end with no tip was pointed down.

With the sword completely frozen in place, she spoke.

“So allow me to show you how I deal with that.”

Carissa stabbed the end of Curtana Original into the ground.

The great noise of a shockwave pounded on Kamijou’s ears.

With the second princess in the center, a dome-shaped storm of destruction with a radius of 500 meters erupted.

She had most likely taken the flow of magic power focused on the all dimension

severing spell and changed it to a different route. Although the created destructive power was not as high as the power needed to slice through other dimensions, shockwaves were scattered evenly in all directions in the 3 dimensional world.

It was basically an explosion.

The ground was torn up, trees were knocked down, and the large wall of destruction reached Kamijou in an instant.

“Ooooooooooooooohhhhhh!?”

As he yelled, Kamijou held up his right hand.

However, that failed.

The power was both too great and too continuous, so Kamijou’s right hand was not enough to completely negate it. He had lost his memories, so he only had the knowledge, but he was forcibly reminded of Innocentius and Dragon Breath.

A terrible pressure attacked his right hand, he heard the unpleasant noise of his bones creaking, and pain ran up his arm.

Pushed by that power, it took less than 2 seconds for his feet to be lifted from the ground.

Once he was in the air, the rest was simple.

Kamijou’s body flew further up into the air.

The dome-shaped explosion had a radius of 500 meters.

Kamijou’s body was fired diagonally up by its force until he was 200 meters up in the night sky. In the instant when the force pushing him up and gravity were in equilibrium, Kamijou Touma floated motionless in the air and looked at the sparse night view of Folkestone.

(What do I do…?)

The countdown for his fall began.

And Kamijou's right hand did not have a convenient power that would allow him to land safely from a fall of 200 meters.

(What do I do!?)

The always present force of gravity bared its fangs towards Kamijou Touma.

Between the lines 3

Queen Elizard was riding a horse.

She was not riding along an elegantly maintained dirt course meant for horse riding. Instead, she was on a narrow paved road heading from Windsor to London. Just a bit before, she had been travelling through a dark forest, but now gentle pastures stretched out before her all the way to the horizon.

(…Really. The British flag is a fusion of the flags of England, Scotland, and the others as a symbol of our union and yet we're completely scattered. It looks like I really have to recover *that* from London to bring us all together again…)

She had travelled about 50 kilometers.

Compared to the previous forest and hills, the path was not all that complex. (If she ignored the speed limit) she might have been able to arrive in London in only 30 minutes using a car.

But…

(It looks like this is the limit for a horse even if it is militarily trained.)

Elizard sighed as she held the reins.

Some of the thoroughbreds that appeared in horse races could run faster than a car, but that speed was only possible on a soft surface like dirt or a lawn. If a horse dashed at full speed atop hard asphalt, its hooves would break.

Also, horse tracks were like short or medium length races to the horses, so they couldn't keep those speeds up for a longer distance of 50 kilometers.

As a result, the queen was moving along at about 20 to 30 kph while taking occasional short breaks to ensure she didn't wear out the horse.

(The horse is wearing special horseshoes for public roads and I could increase its physical strength and stamina with one of my spells…but I suppose I shouldn't force it. This would go much faster if I could use the large scale magic circles placed occasionally along the old road that increase the horse's horse power, but I can't exactly do that.)

The magic circles along the old road were under the jurisdiction of the British government, so people under the influence of the second princess would be able to tell she was using them. If that happened, things were sure to get much more troublesome.

Her slow progress did not bring an irritated expression to the queen's face.

Instead, Elizard's gaze held pity for the horse she was overusing.

"Sorry for having you come along with me in such a dangerous situation."

The horse did not understand human language of course, but the queen spoke to it regardless. The horse did not respond, but there was no dissatisfaction, fear, or confusion in its strong movements. As she watched the mass of muscles propelling her ever forward, the queen decided that she had been blessed with a truly excellent subordinate.

A car's headlights then came shining from behind.

Thinking it might be pursuit from the knights or the Royal Family, she focused on Curtana Second as it hung from her hip, but that was not who it was.

A gaudy youth riding in a gaudy convertible drove right up next to Elizard and the military horse. The man in the driver's seat was gaudy, but so was the

woman in the passenger seat.

Actually, looking closer….

“Yaaay! The hitchhiking was a success!”

“Y-you’re kidding, right!? You really stayed there in the forest waiting for a car to come by!?”

Sitting in the passenger seat, Laura Stuart smiled and nodded towards Elizard who was sitting atop the horse in shock.

The edges of the gaudy youth’s lips bent up.

“At first I was afraid because I thought she was some kind of hitchhiking ghost, but it turned out she was just an annoying pervert. I was just going to throw her out somewhere around here, but if you know her, can you take her?”

“Sorry about that. I’ll take that other-worldly idiot.”

Elizard sincerely apologized, grabbed the woman in the passenger seat with an arm, and pulled her over onto the back of the horse.

At that point, the man holding the convertible’s steering wheel finally got around to noticing something.

“Huh? Is that a horse? That’s a horse!”

“…Of course it is.”

“Gyah ha ha! That horse just said brrr! It said brr! Oh, wow! I don’t think I’ve ever seen a horse this up close before! Let me get a picture!”

“No, don’t take out your cell phone, you idiot! The flash will scare the horse! And you shouldn’t use your cell phone while driving!!”

“Okay, here goes.”

Ching-a-ling-a-ling! With a ridiculous electronic noise, he took the picture.

Elizard reflexively made her perfect queen’s smile that she used for photos.

“Aw, shit. The horse is all blurry. You can’t tell what it is at all. It looks like the old woman on top is ascending into heaven or something. Wait…? I think I’ve seen you before. Are you one of my aunts or something?”

“…”

Still smiling, Queen Elizard reached for Curtana Second.

The ceremonial sword may have only had a fifth of its power left, but it could still slice something as trifling as a dimension.

With a slicing noise, the convertible’s radiator was cut clean off and the coolant leaking out led to the engine burning out.

The queen gave a “hmph” of triumph in the direction of the convertible that had stalled and would no longer start.

“Aww. You ruined the car I waited so long for.”

“Kh! Oh, no! I could have saved a lot of time by taking that car and heading to London!!”

Hearing Laura’s words, Elizard now regretted what she had done, but she turned her thoughts back in a positive direction.

She grabbed the horse’s reins again.

“Well, I suppose I can’t just leave you behind here.”

Elizard and Laura Stuart headed off in the direction of London.

Chapter 6: Destruction of the Knights' and Princess's Defensive Line. *Safety_in_Subway.*

Part 1

Second Princess Carissa stood in the dark forest at Folkestone.

Although, it might have been better to call it a former forest.

Tens and even hundreds of trees had been broken to pieces and blown far away by the last strike. Carissa was standing in the center of an area with upturned black soil and torn up stumps that had just barely managed to remain behind.

"Hm, I guess that was a bit too much. …But I suppose this sword guarantees the success of the revolution."

The second princess rested Curtana Original on her shoulder and gave a light sigh.

The dome-shaped explosion had not been the proper way of using Curtana. That may have been the reason the sword was lightly vibrating. It would probably subside before long, but it gave an ominous feeling that the vibrations would break the sword if she continued to use it like that.

(I guess you really should read the instructions manual and use your tools accordingly. This needs more than just emergency measures on the battlefield. I need to head back to Buckingham Palace and give it a proper tune-up.)

The carriage that had been ambushed by the mercenary William Orwell was completely gone. It had been transporting the Index Librorum Prohibitorum that possessed 103,000 grimoires, but she had no way of checking if the girl had survived.

That grimoire library had been necessary for the evidence that the French government had been behind the Eurotunnel bombing that had started the whole incident, but…

(…Well, it has no more value than a logical pretext, so that doesn't really matter. I already have the right to control this country. Now that a war has broken out on an illogical pretext, no one's going to argue.)

With the sword that had no tip or blade still resting on her shoulder, she pulled out a cell phone with her other hand and operated it with her thumb. She chose one of the speed dial numbers in the memory and held it up to her ear.

She was calling the knights waiting in London's Buckingham Palace.

"How are things in London?"

"We have succeeded in mostly taking control of all the major British cities including the capital. The disturbances in London have ended and there is no sign of anymore reckless rioting by civilians."

"I see. It seems Knight Leader was defeated here."

"…!? Th-that's…"

"You had realized it, hadn't you? Did you want to deny it?"

Second Princess Carissa laughed. As a large amount of Telesma had been sent to the knights and Knight Leader via Curtana Original, the defeat of that leader would create a tremor in the total amount of power.

(It seems that disturbance couldn't be suppressed.)

Carissa came to that conclusion and then continued on as she didn't especially care.

“I’m going to be heading back there now. Is the Eurostar train running?”

“We just received a report that the freight train sending more personnel your way has arrived…”

The man’s voice sounded somehow unreliable.

“But someone seems to have dismantled the track in various points between London and Folkestone. …Currently, it is being restored in 3 locations, but the entire 100 kilometre length of track needs to be checked over in case it was damaged elsewhere…”

“I see.”

(I suppose that Asian must have gotten here by sneaking aboard the freight train. After he got through, they must not have needed the trains anymore, so they started destroying our infrastructure.)

A smile leaked out onto Carissa’s face at that guerilla type of resistance.

She stared up into the starry sky.

“Then call in an Air Force helicopter patrolling nearby in Folkestone.”

“But…will that really be okay? Won’t that put you at risk of being targeted with anti-air spells?”

“With the amount of Telesma I have from Curtana Original, I won’t die even if the helicopter falls to pieces around me in midair. What matters is getting back to Buckingham Palace as quickly as possible.”

“Understood,” replied the knight. “In other matters, you received a phone call from France while you were away.”

“If it was just a senator, we can ignore it.”

“There was one from a senator, but…this one was from the president. What should we do?”

“Just ignoring it could be interesting, but connect him through to me here. You

can listen in on the side. I'll show you the diplomatic skills of the new head of state."

"Understood," he replied again, this time with a hint of a smile behind it.

After a few seconds, the static in the transmission changed. She was now connected to someone else.

"W-we should cooperate," said a voice right off the bat.

The voice belonged to the French president who had a frequent presence in the media.

"We should cooperate regarding the Eurotunnel terrorist attack."

"Oh, that's a lot of noise." Carissa put on a most unpleasant face despite the fact that the president could not see it. "Are you on the phone in a strip club or something? I can barely hear you over all the indecent noises. How about you quit shoving bills into the dancer's stocking for a second and take this seriously?"

"Y-you're the one that needs to take this seriously!! I'm saying we need to negotiate so we can choose the option that is best for both of us!!"

"Negotiate? Wouldn't it be more appropriate for us to fight to the death? What, do you want to lick my ass or something? I won't say anything about a personal hobby, but it might have a negative effect on the next election if you let your constituents find out."

"D-don't screw around with me!! I know what you've done!!"

He must have breathed onto the receiver because actual noise entered Carissa's ear.

The increasingly cornered French president continued speaking while the second princess messed with him.

"You've dispatched a destroyer in the Strait of Dover! And it has rather large missiles loaded on it! I don't know if you are trying to threaten us, but surely you know that this is doing severe damage to the relationship between our

countries!”

“Oh?” said Carissa as if she didn’t care. “I don’t see how someone who has a nuclear submarine hidden in the Strait of Dover has any right to say that to me. It has been frequently sending and receiving coded transmissions. From the ones we have intercepted, it seems to be an exceedingly French sub and it also seems to have a nuclear missile aimed at London.”

“…!?”

She had a feeling she could hear his mouth wordlessly opening and closing.

Ignoring him, Carissa continued.

“France is a nuclear power just like America and Russia. I know you had the option, but…it was just so damn blatant. Of course, there is the treaty banning them that you once borrowed the power of the Roman Catholic Church to get the EU to bring about. Did you let your guard down because you had used that treaty as a shield to rob us of nuclear weapons and the ability to develop them? Or did you just think we couldn’t take it out with a single preemptive attack?”

A loud explosion was heard.

The noise was coming from a long distance away. It was far enough away that there was a discrepancy between light and sound as with distant thunder. Carissa turned her gaze in the direction of the distant sea.

“Oh, don’t worry. According to the report from the destroyer, that was just a seagull.”

As she spoke, Carissa swung Curtana Original lightly with the hand not holding the phone. This caused a 100 meter dimensional slice which created a large white fan-shaped piece of wreckage along the trajectory of the sword.

Carissa kicked the giant fan with a leg that held a piece of Michael’s power and it flew off into the night sky. The fan rotated at high speed like a helicopter rotor as it disappeared beyond the horizon.

“…Our radars and anti-air defense weapons can detect and intercept foreign objects at that level of accuracy. The old large missiles are nothing more than

targets. With mere hunks of metal that have no concealing spells cast on them, we can shoot down every single one you fire at us."

Carissa created and kicked away a second and a third giant fan.

"N-no, you've got it all wrong!! That submarine isn't ours. Coded transmissions? Those had to have been tricks intended to make the submarine look French!!"

"Well, it's true we have no proof," readily admitted Second Princess Carissa. "If you're telling the truth, I assume you won't mind if we sink this insolent submarine of unknown affiliation out of self defense as it is targeting our capital. If it really has no connection to France, you will have no reason to attempt to rescue those aboard either. …If you do attempt to interfere with this operation in any way, I will take that as confirmation that the 'submarine of unknown affiliation' is working with France."

A tremor spread across the ground.

That had not been the destroyer's weapons. It had been the noise of the giant fans Carissa had fired striking the ocean surface sinking the submarine hidden within the ocean with their enormous weight.

"Oh, did I get a hole in one? They probably shouldn't have been staying so close to the surface in order to be able to fire the missile. And they won't make it in time if they frantically try to dive now. At this rate, it won't even last a minute."

"D-damn you…!!"

"Oh, I know what to do. For every time the submarine of unknown affiliation requests help from the French navy and for every millimeter it tries to flee in the direction of France, we will fire one of the bunker cluster cruise missiles on our destroyer. The first will be aimed for Versailles, the second for Paris, and the third…oh, who cares. I can decide on that if you haven't learned your lesson after the first two. …The value of a leader is determined by how many of his people's lives he protects. With how you handled this, I'd say you're getting a failing grade."

With that, he was only able to sit by silently and watch as his trump card sank. As he listened to the screams of his comrades, all options other than merely

bearing with it had been sealed.

The French president remained at a loss for words and a tone of ridicule entered Carissa's voice.

"How about you switch out with the princess at the top who is refusing to leave the cradle? This might be about the pride you gained by obtaining a parliamentary government, but no matter how many idiots gather together, they can't come up with a plan that will have any effect against us. It would be best for you if you went ahead and bowed down to the Holy Woman of Versailles and ask for her opinion. …If you don't, you will have nothing left but to be remembered as history's most incompetent president because you doomed your own country to destruction by starting a war out of your own arrogance."

Carissa heard a cry on the other end of the phone that sounded like a child throwing a tantrum, but she ignored it and hung up.

The sound of a helicopter rotor reverberated from above her head.

It was the Air Force helicopter that had been patrolling in Folkestone. An observation helicopter was basically an attack helicopter with the weapons removed and this was a very small one with a width of less than a meter. It was made for two people, so one of the pilots had likely needed to be left behind in order for Carissa to get on. Landing to let the other pilot down must have taken a bit of time, because there was no excuse for how long the helicopter had taken to get there otherwise.

Noticing Carissa, the observation helicopter stopped at about 20 meters up and slowly started to lower.

However, the second princess moved first.

She jumped 20 meters straight up into the air, grabbed the side of the helicopter with one arm, and thrust her sharp heels into its armor. As the shocked pilot watched on, she opened the door and climbed in as carefree as if she were climbing into the backseat of her private car.

"…Helicopters are convenient, but I don't like how they mess up my set hair."

Carissa, the woman who had just jumped high into the sky using the power of

her own legs, looked displeased as she reached up to her hair. Folding her arms, she spoke with the tone of someone telling a driver where to go.

“Could you take me to Buckingham Palace? I have to do some work on this thing there,” Carissa said as she lightly tapped the side of Curtana Original with the back of her hand. “And don’t be slow. If you aren’t going to be any help, I can always just bring down the helicopter and run there on my own.”

Part 2

“Ow…”

Kamijou Touma awoke with a dull pain in the area of his backbone.

He was inside an old car left in the mountains near the foundation of an old ruined building. The car seemed foreign and was quite large making it look like it had bad gas mileage. However, it wasn’t all too clear whether it was accurate to say he was “inside” the car. It had no roof and its doors were missing. Kamijou was lying face up in what was little more than the chassis.

Beyond where the door should have been was a dark forest. It was still the middle of the night, but his eyes must have gotten used to the darkness because he no longer saw a single shade of black. Instead, the darkness had its own type of light and darkness and color allowing him to see objects’ silhouettes. For someone who lived in Tokyo like Kamijou, truly experiencing starlight was a rare thing.

(What…happened…?)

Kamijou sat up on the sofa-like backseat and tried to sort out the information in his head.

(…Wasn't I not able to negate the second princess's attack and then got blown away way up in the sky?)

Common sense told him that there was no way he would have survived falling from a height of a few hundred meters. That was well beyond the level where something cushioning him on the ground would save him. Nevertheless, Kamijou was in one piece and didn't have any broken bones. In fact, he had nothing more than a few scratches.

And then…

"So you've finally decided to wake up? You certainly are carefree."

Kamijou turned around in the direction of the low male voice.

"Ee!? Acqua of the Back!!"

Kamijou instinctively started to bring up his guard, but his foot got caught on a part of the unstable car and he fell right back down onto the backseat.

Acqua of the Back made no attempt to enter the car.

He merely stood outside the car holding a ridiculously huge weapon as usual (although this one was different from the one he had in Academy City).

Kamijou cautiously eyed Acqua and slowly asked a question.

"You're…still alive…?"

"Only one who attacked his enemy with the intent to kill and then gained proper evidence that he had killed the enemy should ask that question." Acqua sighed out of annoyance. "To be honest, I did not expect you all to cause the power I had stored up by using the Virgin Mary Worship spell to explode from within. I was able to immediately create a bypass and release the mass of power outside my body, but that has caused my power to temporarily drop to the level of a normal Saint."

Despite normally preferring to remain silent, Acqua continued on about things Kamijou did not understand. The malice emitted along with the words made Kamijou shiver and think that Acqua might smash him to pieces right then and

there.

“S-so, what happened to me after that explosion?”

“Hmph. Nothing much. I merely grabbed you in midair and landed with you.”

“That doesn’t sound like nothing much!!” said Kamijou in complete shock. “Hm? Hey, wait a second. What about Index!? Carissa’s final attack was basically an explosion in all directions, right!? What happened to the carriage she was on!?”

“Instead of asking me that, look around you and figure it out for yourself.”

Acqua pointed to the side with a look of pure contempt in his eyes. Kamijou looked in that direction and saw a nun in a white habit unconscious in the passenger seat of the car.

“…You grabbed her, too?”

“Yes, but two was pretty much my limit in that situation.”

He said that bluntly, but Carissa’s strike had definitely been an explosion. In that instant, Acqua must have grabbed Index from the carriage, caught Kamijou in midair, and put up at least the bare minimum of a defense for himself.

(…Th-the more I hear, the less I think I can win. Actually, how the hell did I survive against such a monster back in Academy City?)

“Why…did you save me?”

“It is true that it may have been simpler to just let you die,” Acqua unhesitatingly replied. “Are you aware that you are the cause of this disturbance?”

“…”

“However, the situation here is different than when I spoke with you in Academy City. Your defeat of members of the Roman Catholic Church is not the problem here. The true boss is after your right hand.”

“What? Who is this ‘true boss’?”

“The current leader of the alliance between the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church is a man called Fiamma of the Right. This Fiamma is after your right hand and the knowledge inside Index Librorum Prohibitorum that is necessary to make proper use of it.”

Acqua ignored Kamijou’s confusion and continued the one-sided conversation.

“As such, pulverizing your right arm until nothing remains or destroying Index Librorum Prohibitorum’s brain are possible methods of ruining Fiamma’s plans.”

“!?”

He didn’t really understand the situation, but Kamijou’s body stiffened at the imminent danger.

However, Acqua himself rejected that option.

“If I had intended to go that route, I would have abandoned the two of you and you would have died on your own.”

“…Then what are you trying to do?”

“I plan to destroy the cause of this disturbance,” Acqua responded with no hesitation. “However, I am aware that Imagine Breaker and Index Librorum Prohibitorum are nothing more than accessories that are closely related to the true cause. Losing the cornerstones of his plan would be a major problem for Fiamma, but there is a danger he would change his plan and begin again. There is also a danger that he will spread meaningless destruction around out of desperation. …So I have determined that I must destroy the cause behind the cause.”

After saying that, Acqua turned his back on Kamijou.

With his gigantic sword in hand, the man spoke some more.

“However, it has become necessary to put a stop to a tiny dispute that is derived from the original cause. Increasing England’s strength may lead to a chance to put a stop to the increase in Roman Catholic influence over Europe. As a result, this may lead to a primary factor in preventing Fiamma from carrying out his goal.”

“Is there a way to stop this?”

“No petty tricks are needed. You should already be well acquainted with my methods.”

“But Carissa and the knights already have control of the entirety of the United Kingdom.”

“The size of the obstacle does not matter. Carissa and the knights’ new order is centred around Curtana Original which makes it especially fragile.”

“?”

“It is not my style to strike there. Perhaps I really should go with a completely fair and open attack,” Acqua of the Back spat out before he disappeared.

He must have left at such a high speed that Kamijou's eyes could not perceive it.

(Acqua of the Back, hm?)

Kamijou thought while he put his hand on Index’s shoulder as she sat unconscious in the passenger seat.

(That man is truly a deadly enemy to have. Can he really help overturn this situation?)

Part 3

Kamijou did not know what to do to help Index, but after a bit she woke up on her own.

“Uuuhn…”

“Index! Are you okay!? Are you hurt anywhere!?”

Kamijou’s face lit up.

In response, Index stirred a bit.

“…Did you save me from the knights, Touma?”

“Yeah, that’s what you’d think, isn’t it?” Kamijou averted his gaze. “But things weren’t that convenient.”

Index stared at him in puzzlement for a second.

And then…

“Mh!? Did you come here with yet another strange girl…!?”

“I can see why you’d assume so, but fate was not so kind to me!!” Kamijou denied the claim with a shout. “I’m glad to see you’re your usual self.”

“Touma, I want a midnight snack.”

“And now you’re a little too much back to normal.”

“?”

With Kamijou finally relieved and Index puzzled, the two of them wandered through the dark forest a bit until they met up with some Amakusa members. It hadn’t been pure coincidence. The Amakusas had detected the giant explosion Second Princess Carissa had created and were covertly searching through the area so she wouldn’t notice.

Their temporary base was the large rescue plane that could take off and land on water. With Kamijou and Index onboard, the plane raced along a narrow river at a speed that would cause even an expert pilot to pale in order to take off into the night sky.

The plane had looked big on the outside, but it felt cramped with over 50 people onboard. As it flew, Tatemiya Saiji spoke to Kamijou.

“It seems Second Princess Carissa used an Air Force helicopter to head for

Buckingham Palace.”

Kamijou felt like he could hear voices from farther back in the plane yelling “Itsuwa, go! This is your chance!!”, “I-I can’t. I still reek of alcohol!!”, and “You’re just imagining it! That was hours and hours ago!!”, but Tatemiya pleasantly stood in the way.

“To quell the coup d’etat, we have to do something about the second princess. Fortunately, the physical body Carissa was born with is not special like that of a Saint as with the Priestess. The core of the coup d’etat is Curtana Original. If we can just destroy that, Carissa will lose all of her power.”

Upon hearing the word “Priestess”, Kamijou looked over at Kanzaki Kaori.

She was sitting with her back resting on the wall of the airplane. She had bandages wrapped around her in places and her exposed skin was covered in bruises. When Kanzaki noticed Kamijou’s gaze, her ponytailed head apologetically lowered slightly.

“…I am sorry. The former Agnese Forces and Sherry Cromwell are currently battling the knights and normally I would be doing so too, but…as you can see, I have been defeated. My strength is being restored, but it may take some time before I can move again.”

“No, that’s fine… But are you okay?”

“I wish I could tell you that this wasn’t a problem.”

Kanzaki’s slightly torn up lips loosened up a bit and seemed to form a smile. She gave a look in Tatemiya’s direction and he gave a small nod and began speaking again.

He spoke about what Kamijou had told them Acqua had said.

“If it’s true that Acqua defeated Knight Leader who was such a major obstacle for us, this may have actually turned in our favor.”

“…Yeah, but Acqua is a member of God’s Right Seat. Also, that’s just what he told me. I didn’t actually see him defeat Knight Leader. Shouldn’t we keep in mind that he could have told us that as part of some plan?”

“One of our scouts has confirmed that those two really seemed to be fighting at Folkestone. Since Acqua is freely moving around, it’s only natural to assume for now that the head of the knights was defeated.”

They of course could not abandon the possibility that even that was part of some trap, but that was why Tatemiya had said “for now”.

Kamijou thought for a bit.

“If what Acqua is saying is true….”

“Then all that’s left is Second Princess Carissa and Curtana Original. …She is the most troublesome enemy, though.”

However, the problem would not be resolved if they did not do something about her.

Kanzaki then cut into the conversation.

“What happened to Queen Elizard and the head of the church, Laura Stuart?”

“We haven’t received any report regarding that. According to the knights’ communications network, they at least attempted to escape while being transported from Windsor Castle to London, but we don’t know what happened to them after that,” Tatemiya replied to Kanzaki with a bitter expression.

Kamijou looked at their faces.

“That queen seemed like she really knew what she was doing. Do you think she has some secret plan to turn this all around in one shot?”

“With her ability, we can hope for that kind of direct battle ability, but even if she does not have such a plan, her mere existence is very valuable both in domestic affairs and in diplomatic affairs. …The real way to defeat Carissa’s new order may actually lie there.”

“?”

As Kamijou looked on in puzzlement, Tatemiya spoke as if to bring that aspect of the discussion to a close.

“Anyway, we need to defeat Second Princess Carissa in order to bring this coup d’etat to an end as quickly as possible. To do that, we need to prevent her from using Curtana Original.”

They might be able to pull off destroying the spiritual item known as Curtana Original since they had Kamijou’s right hand.

“But she’s inside Buckingham Palace, right? With London, as well as the rest of the country, under the knights’ control, can we really break into a tightly guarded palace?”

“Trying to break into the front door of Buckingham Palace right now would be like directly taking on a country’s entire army. However, we may be able to sneak into London.”

“?”

“Quite a few subway lines run underneath London, but one of them is the Victoria line. That line runs almost directly beneath Buckingham Palace. Using that, we can still make some trouble just by getting to a nearby subway station and not actually entering the grounds of Buckingham Palace.”

Tatemiya stopped speaking for a bit and then started again on a slightly different topic.

“Why do you think Second Princess Carissa returned to Buckingham Palace?”

“Huh? She doesn’t want the coup d’etat to be defeated easily, right? So she’s probably just returning to the fortress with the strongest security.”

“Curtana Original has tremendous power and Buckingham Palace does not currently have any defensive magical spells cast on it. She isn’t someone who would be easily defeated if she was on her own, and if she were holing up for safety, she would have chosen a place with more magical security like Windsor Castle.”

“Then why? I doubt she would go there for no reason. Is there governmental value behind orders that come from London or something?”

“Well, I suppose there could be some kind of message like that, but there is a

more direct reason. That reason is Curtana Original."

"What does that sword have to do with it?"

"Curtana Original is too strong. It may be limited to within this country, but it uses power that rivals that of the leader of the angels. But that creates a certain concern. Curtana Original possesses the power to utterly destroy an external enemy, but if a mistake is made in controlling the power and the user loses control, the first one it will annihilate is the user herself."

"I see," Kamijou muttered.

Tatemiya looked at his expression and nodded once.

"Of course, whether it's the Original or the Second, only a British queen or princess can wield Curtana. Those aren't people who can be allowed to die, so a large facility is needed to suppress its power if its power is headed out of control. The facility for preventing Curtana's power from getting out of hand and creating an explosion was built into Buckingham Palace because that is where they stay for the majority of the year."

"Curtana Original was once lost to history and Curtana Second was used instead. The cause of its disappearance is said to be the Puritan Revolution, but if Curtana's power truly was perfect, that revolution would not have succeeded because Curtana would have slaughtered all resistance. Since that didn't happen…"

"Curtana Original's power went out of control once in the past…?"

They were merely building suppositions upon suppositions, but according to Tatemiya, Third Princess Villian had given affirmation to some of their suppositions.

"As such, it sounds pretty likely that they would have planned a way to prevent that from happening again. After all, having no means of prevention led to an opening that allowed a revolution to form."

Kanzaki continued where Tatemiya left off.

"If there is a large facility that gives and receives energy with Curtana Original,

it may interfere with Curtana Original by reversing the flow of the magic power. That is our theory at any rate. Now that Carissa has entered Buckingham Palace in order to stabilize Curtana Original, we have a real chance to send it out of control making it unusable."

As long as she couldn't use Curtana Original, the second princess's power would fall to the level of a normal human.

The knights would also lose the tremendous power they had within the country.

"The union between Carissa and the knights is not all that strong. After all, the knights are led by someone other than her, Knight Leader."

"? But he started this coup d'etat with her, right?"

"That was because the knights had determined that Carissa's new order was the most beneficial path for England. It also means that the knights will mercilessly turn their backs on the second princess if they determine that continuing to follow her would be disadvantageous for England. In other words…"

"Whether she can use Curtana Original or not is directly linked to the success or failure of this massive coup d'etat…?"

That vision caused Kamijou's face to brighten, but the brightness suddenly left.

"Wait. But I thought Buckingham Palace didn't have any magical devices in it? You all said something about causing diplomatic problems when guests sensed something magical and mistook it for being invited into a trap."

"That is what the subway is for," replied Kanzaki immediately. "It is true that there are no magical devices in Buckingham Palace during times of peace, but a subway line runs beneath the palace. A special railroad car with a magic circle on it is kept in an area branching off from the normal track. The special car is set up so it can be promptly taken to the area directly below Buckingham Palace when Curtana Original is headed out of control."

It was true that, using this method, one could say that there were no magical devices within the grounds of Buckingham Palace and still be technically telling the truth. The Amakusas guessed that it may have originally been installed on a large carriage that would be left on the palace grounds, but had been moved over

to the subway system at some point.

Curtana Original had been missing for a few hundred years, so the safety device that used the subway system must have been created for Curtana Second. However, it wouldn't be surprising if Second Princess Carissa was planning to use that safety device since it was for another Curtana-type spiritual item.

"Currently, the Anglican Church is communicating with the air fortress Coven Compass. They are taking preparations to use Coven Compass's large scale flash spell to use a large amount of magic power to forcibly interfere with Curtana Original via the subway in an attempt to send it out of control." Kanzaki seemed to be carefully choosing her words as she continued. "There is a distance greater than 500 kilometers between Coven Compass and Buckingham Palace, but hidden members of the Anglican Church are setting up spiritual items to act as 'relay points' in 10 places along the way. They will be arranged to guide the massive amount of magical power. If it succeeds, it is possible that that dangerous sword will be made unusable or at least severely weakened."

"So we're headed to London so we can attack Buckingham Palace once usage of Curtana Original has been sealed?"

"There is that, but…" Kanzaki seemed oddly hesitant.

Tatemiya felt like he had no choice but to break in and continue for her.

"If you remember, she said that the special railroad car used to bring Curtana back under control is kept in an area branching off from the normal track."

"Yeah, and?"

"Apparently, the point where it branches off is protected by a magical barrier, so it normally looks just like a normal wall. That means we need to destroy that barrier and secure the route."

"I see," said Kamijou looking down at his right hand.

He knew what he had to do more or less.

"Basically, we have to get to a subway station near Buckingham Palace on our own and then I destroy that barrier in the tunnel with my right hand?"

“There is still one problem with that.”

“?”

“Some new security measures have been put up within London. And they are especially sensitive to magic. To put it simply, it will immediately detect anyone wandering around if they have magic power. Their location will be displayed on a map and fully armed knights will be on them almost instantly. Basically, this means that magicians who can refine their own magic power cannot take part in this plan.”

“Eh? Then…”

Kamijou stared back at Tatemiya and Kanzaki’s faces as if he thought he had misheard, but Tatemiya and even Kanzaki averted their gaze.

“…U-um. People who cannot refine their own magic power at all are weak civilian-level people. In other words, you and Index are the only people who can fight here.”

Even if she averted her gaze, Kanzaki still said what had to be said.

Ahead of her averted gaze was Third Princess Villian.

“Without a member of the Royal Family like Lady Villian you cannot interfere with the magical barrier within the subway tunnel or the special railway car with the magic circle. Consequently, we have no choice but to rely on the three of you for this.”

Part 4

And so they ended up breaking into the center of enemy territory.

Kamijou, Index, and Villian were in a high class residential area in western London called Kensington and moving east.

However, they were not on foot.

London was a few dozen kilometers across, so they couldn't exactly walk to their destination. They were moving along a vacant street in a small car being driven by Third Princess Villian. Kamijou found it incredibly odd to see the kind of princess one saw in picture books holding the steering wheel.

"…Even if I am a princess, I'm not that sheltered," was the 24 year old princess's explanation.

Kamijou also felt really bad about having an actual princess drive him around, but neither he nor Index knew how to drive.

They were headed for a subway station at the center of London near Buckingham Palace. Even if they didn't have to get on the palace grounds, they still had to get very, very close, so they were in a dangerous situation.

Apparently, there were hundreds of thousands of security cameras set up throughout London, but according to Tatemiya and the others waiting in the rescue plane that had landed on a street, those cameras were not functioning.

"Anyone who can use magic would move through the blind spots of the cameras or use spells to prevent themselves from being recorded by the cameras, so it seems Second Princess Carissa decided they were too much trouble since she already had almost complete control of the country. She most likely ordered the three major security companies in the city to stop the cameras."

"If you know the cameras have stopped functioning, have you stolen the footage from the security companies? Are you that good with science-side security?"

"No, we just observed them from a long distance with binoculars. The security cameras have auto-focus, but there was no sign of it moving. That means they aren't functioning. It's similar to a human sitting there with his pupils completely dilated."

They had analyzed the situation in an extremely analog way, but Tatemiya and the rest of the Amakusas had probably been right. The magic cabal known as New Light had snuck through the blind spots of the cameras and into London, but an amateur like Kamijou couldn't do something like that and Index knew almost nothing of science. They had been travelling through side streets and back alleys, but if the security network made up by the cameras had been functioning, they would have been caught in no time.

Sitting in the passenger seat, Kamijou spoke while staring at the unmoving cameras placed along the street.

"But won't the knights notice us if we move along these empty streets with an engine making all this noise?"

"We'll be fine," responded Index from the backseat. "Currently, the knights are staying on their guard by using magic. Instead of relying on their own senses, they have created a defense network that uses senses augmented by spells. Even if there are a lot of them, they still have to cover dozens of kilometers worth of ground covering all of London. …But if we magically use what they're doing against them, we can make it so they won't notice us even if we're right in front of them."

Kamijou was glad to have the knowledge of the 103,000 book grimoire library, but then he realized something.

"Wait a second, Index. How do you know what kind of magic the knights are currently using?"

"Eh? Because they're on top of that building over there."

"Wah!?"

Kamijou hurriedly looked over in the direction Index was pointing and saw some dark figures on top of the building. However, the silver armor-wearing silhouettes didn't notice them and jumped over to a different building.

(With so few people around, I can't believe they don't hear the sound of the engine…)

Apparently, relying too much on magic had its drawbacks.

Nevertheless, if Index weren't occasionally giving Villian (seemingly) arbitrary instructions such as "turn there and move slowly", they probably would have been caught in an instant.

"So are the Royal Family and the knights not using the military or the police?"

"I would guess they're being used to deal with the civilians. According to the Amakusas, the normal people have been gathered up in large facilities like hotels and theaters. And if you're going to get people to listen to what some unknown person is telling them, they probably wanted to avoid using difficult to understand magic."

When Kamijou thought about it, he decided that pointing a gun at someone would indeed be much more effective than pointing some type of unknown staff or crystal ball at them. Of course, firing off a warning shot with the magic would change that, but they probably wanted to avoid having to fire that much if they didn't have to.

(Even so…)

As Kamijou stared at the empty London scenery from the passenger seat, his eyes suddenly moved in Villian's direction as she operated the steering wheel.

She was a blonde woman with white skin dressed in a green dress that looked straight out of a picture book. She was no more other-worldly than Index, but the two clearly had a very different feel to them. Index would go running headlong into even a foreign culture like science while Villian gave the impression that she would simply disappear were her delicate surroundings not maintained like an alpine plant quietly producing flowers.

Villian noticed Kamijou's gaze.

"Do you need something?"

"N-no…" Kamijou shook his head.

Before they had left, Kanzaki and Tatemiya had told him that inadvertently flipping up her skirt would be lèse majesté because she had the blood of the British Royal Family flowing in her veins, but Kamijou hadn't understood what they were talking about.

“Come to think of it, they said that anyone who could refine their own magic power would be detected by Carissa and the knights, right?”

“Y-yes.” Villian awkwardly twisted up her body within the green dress as if she were attempting to escape Kamijou’s gaze. “I am very sorry. I know I should have learned that kind of thing as a member of the Royal Family, but I refused to be taught any knowledge or skills that could be used as a weapon. All I can do is operate already activated spiritual items by touching them. My sister Carissa is attempting to eliminate me because of the possibility that I could use Curtana Original, but I would not be able to use it even if it was handed to me.”

“Huh? Don’t we need a member of the Royal Family to get through the barrier in the subway?”

“Yes… If only my mother or my sister Rimea were here… With someone as inexperienced as me, I might not be able to do it right even with the help of Index Librorum Prohibitorum…”

“I-I don’t think you need to get so down! In fact, I don’t get why it would be necessary for a queen to know how to use magic!!”

“…Really? It seems the normal servants, maids, cooks, and gardeners in Buckingham Palace have headed down into the subway tunnel for this plan. If only I had a better way of protecting everyone without violence, I wouldn’t have had to head to such a dangerous place with you two.”

Villian looked quite discouraged. It seemed not being able to directly help fight the coup d’etat had taken its toll on her.

Kamijou forced his gaze back to London in an attempt to somehow change the subject.

“Y’know…the back alleys here sure are different from the ones in Academy City.”

“Touma. Being a connoisseur of back alleys isn’t something to be proud of.”

“I never said anything about being proud of it,” replied Touma. “Anyway, I know we have to do something about Carissa and keep her from using Curtana Original, but will taking out the top boss really put an end to such a large scale

coup d’etat? I’m a bit worried this will just end up turning into a long and drawn out fight.”

London was not the only place that had changed. Almost all of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were under the control of the knights led by Second Princess Carissa. Kamijou wasn’t confident that taking out a single pillar of a problem that had spread so far would really bring everything back to normal.

“I think that the coup d’etat will come to an end if we stop Carissa,” replied Third Princess Villian timidly.

“?”

Villian frowned at Kamijou’s puzzled expression.

“There are actually many different types of coups d’etat, but I think the odds of this one turning into a long drawn out war because its leader is lost are quite low.”

Index nodded and added to what Villian had been hesitatingly saying.

“The Amakusas have been intercepting the knights’ transmissions. Apparently, a disturbance has been spreading throughout the knights due to Knight Leader’s defeat. To the participants in the coup d’etat, Knight Leader and the second princess are like mental pillars of support. Now, one of those has been completely broken down. So if the remaining pillar is destroyed, the knights’ determination will simply collapse.”

“…Don’t you think that most of them will be unsure of what to do once the very people urging them to take part in the plan have been defeated?” asked Villian.

(She may be right.)

“Also, the roles of the United Kingdom are divided up between the three factions of the Royal Family, the knights, and the church. That can also be used to put a stop to the coup d’etat,” continued Index.

“How?”

“Because the diplomatic relations with other countries are single-handedly done by the Royal Family. In other words, the knights excel at directly fighting, but they have no way of negotiating with other countries. Most likely, the only ones in the coup d’etat that can deal equally on a national level are Second Princess Carissa and Knight Leader because he acts as an advisor in those matters.”

“But will they really lay down their arms because of that? Once they realize they don’t know what to do, isn’t it possible the knights will just go on a rampage or something?”

“I have no way of being sure, but I highly doubt that would happen. The knights’ goal is to protect England. They joined the second princess’s coup d’etat because they deemed it to be the most effective method of doing that. …But once they lose Carissa, they should realize that continuing with the coup d’etat would catastrophically damage the country, so they should sheathe their swords at that point. They should determine that sheathing their swords would be the path that would damage England the least.”

“…”

Kamijou remained silent for a second and then looked over at Index.

“Hearing this kind of thing from Kanzaki or Itsuwa or someone is one thing, but hearing it from you, it just doesn’t seem to have much credibility,” he said slowly.

“…Touma. By any chance, do you think I’m completely hopeless at anything other than magic?”

Kamijou was about to point out that all she ever did was eat, sleep, and watch TV, but he realized that would only lead to a chomp to the back of the head, so he opted to remain silent.

During their discussion, they had gotten close to their destination the subway station.

“Stop. A car engine is probably too much now that we’re this close to Buckingham Palace.”

At Index’s insistence, Villian stopped the small car in the alley. The three got out

of the vehicle and looked around the area.

Despite it being almost two in the morning, the complete lack of people was unusual for a capital city like London. There was no one on the walkways and no cars driving down the road. Before Kamijou had headed to Folkestone, there had been residents looking on being pushed back by the police, but those disturbances had completely disappeared. The battles on the streets between the knights and the church had been at least temporarily brought to an end and the residents had been suppressed, so the knights were probably stationed throughout London so they could respond quickly to any complications.

Kamijou looked around, but he didn't see any knights.

In fact, he didn't even sense any human presences in the direction of Buckingham Palace beyond the subway station.

"?"

Suddenly, something soft wrapped around Kamijou's right hand.

Looking back that way, he saw Villian's small glove-covered hands covering up his own hand. Her gloves were not unfashionable ones to help with the cold. They were the elegant decorative gloves that royalty and nobles wore.

"…Please do not enter the palace grounds," she said softly looking up at his face. "I don't know much about magic, so I don't know if it's true, but I have heard my sister Carissa boasting about being able to accurately detect the number of bugs on a group of trees with her search."

"U-umm…sure," Kamijou said as he nodded repeatedly.

Even through the thin silk gloves, Kamijou could feel a soft marshmallow-like sensation that was clearly different to a rough male hand. It seemed Villian did not notice his odd reaction at all.

Glaring at him coldly, Index added to Villian's words.

"Most likely, the knights are using sniping spells to continually scan the area from the windows and the roof. It's probably a wide area version of a spell used to assist with Robin Hood."

Kamijou was about to head for the subway station, but he stopped moving immediately after hearing that.

“Then will it be dangerous to just head to the station from here?”

“We can slip through the gaps in the search. Follow me,” said Index as she moved inconspicuously out from behind the cover. There wasn’t really anything there, but she took unnatural detours around areas of empty space on her way to the station as if she were avoiding invisible searchlights. Following her, Kamijou and Villian had no idea what they were avoiding, so they were about as uneasy as they could be.

Finally, the three of them reached the subway station.

Heading down the stairs, Index finally let out a sigh of relief.

“We should be fine here.”

“…I have no idea what just happened, but should I be thanking you?”

“That would be nice, but what do we do about this?”

Kamijou looked up in puzzlement and Index politely pointed in front of her.

“There’s some kind of wall with clicky things on it in the way.”

“…”

Okay, everyone. Let’s translate that from Index language☆

There’s a shutter with an electronic lock blocking the way. What do we do?

Part 5

That day was only a half day of school!!

As such, Misaka Mikoto, ace of Tokiwadai Middle School, a prestigious esper development school, was in a family restaurant. The time was just before 11 AM. It wasn't quite time for lunch yet, so there weren't many customers. Mikoto was eating an early lunch before she planned to head back to Tokiwadai.

She was going to head back because they were preparing for Academy City's largest cultural festival, the Ichihanaransai. The event was going to have an open campus, so it was going to be open to those from outside like the large-scale sports festival, the Daihaseisai. On the other hand, the more prestigious the school the more visitors hoping to someday get into the school would come, so the schools get rather fired up preparing for it.

Of course, Tokiwadai Middle School would be partially open to the public during the Ichihanaransai, so Mikoto couldn't slack off.

(But…)

Mikoto cut the large Salisbury steak on the iron plate in front of her into small bite size pieces.

(What's with this restaurant? This is the first time I've been here, but is this the land of large breasts or something…?)

As she looked around, she went straight past frustration and into shock.

It seemed the restaurant was geographically located in an area where more high school students came than middle school students. She saw a girl in a sailor uniform with long black hair, a large forehead, and large breasts (next to her was a girl whose breasts weren't particularly big who would have looked good dressed like a shrine maiden) and there was a woman who appeared to be a PE teacher who was wearing a green track suit and had ridiculously large breasts. And to top it all off, there was a girl with glasses and huge breasts sitting in a seat by the window who seemed to actually be a hologram. She may have been some new kind of fake customer to draw in real customers that was created with a type of psychic power, but Mikoto didn't see why they had to make the breasts so big.

(Hm? Wait. If almost everyone here has such a clear bodily characteristic, maybe something in the food here makes your breasts grow!! I-if that's true, this is a Nobel Prize level discovery!!)

Having gotten back to a positive mindset, Mikoto started putting the Salisbury steak into her mouth at a faster rate than before.

Suddenly, her cell phone that she had left on the edge of the table started to vibrate.

Right before the vibrations sent it off the edge of the table, Mikoto grabbed the phone.

(Kuroko wouldn't be calling at this time…)

Mikoto opened the phone and almost fell out of her seat upon seeing the number displayed on the small screen.

It was that idiot with the spiky hair.

"Mgh!? Cough cough cough!!"

Mikoto started choking from the shock.

(Wh-why!? What for!? That idiot pretty much never calls me…Dah! If he had just emailed me beforehand with what he wanted, I wouldn't be this frantic… No, that wouldn't work. Then I'd just be too nervous to open the email!!)

As she thought through all that, Mikoto was trembling uncontrollably, but she couldn't bring herself to just hang up either. Using the call history to call him back would be too high a hurdle for her. Mikoto used her trembling thumb to hit the connect button.

(Th-that's right. Today is a half day all across Academy City, so he must have a lot of free time! I can't skip out on the Ichihanaransai preparations, but if I manage my time well, I have a bit of free time…)

For some reason, she held the cell phone in both hands and brought it up to her ear in a refined manner that she normally did not use. With her mind in complete chaos, the first words that reached her ear were…

“Sorry, Misaka! I’m trying to sneak into a subway station. Do you know how to open a shutter’s electronic lock!?”

“……..”

Misaka Mikoto removed the cell phone from her ear, sighed loudly, and calmly hung up.

She put the phone back on the table and started back on the giant Salisbury steak, but then the small vibrations of the phone started again.

She took a sip of her non-sugar latte and elegantly wiped her lips with a napkin before finally reaching over for the cell phone again.

“Sorry, Misaka! I’m trying to sneak into a subway station. Do you-…!?”

“I heard you the first time and decided to ignore you, you idiot!! Are you really that clueless!?” she yelled as loudly as she could before returning to a normal puzzled expression. “And why do you have to sneak into a subway station? Do you need to get in somewhere that only station personnel are allowed?”

“No, no. There’s a shutter lowered over the entrance and I need to get in. Well, the shutter isn’t too surprising. This is an emergency situation and the last train would have already run by this point normally.”

“Hah? The last train?”

Mikoto’s expression passed puzzled and reached suspicious.

The time was only 11 AM. She had never heard of a line that had its last train before noon.

Then he seemed to realize what had her so puzzled.

“Oh, I see, I see. So there’s a time difference. Sorry, Misaka, were you in class?”

“No, that was fine, but…no, wait just a second. Where the hell are you that there’s a time difference?”

“London.”

Mikoto almost hung up again at that answer.

That clearly couldn't be true. She looked over at the giant flat-panel screen on the wall of the family restaurant. The screen showed foreign news crews reporting the same things over and over again while standing in complete darkness. The people of central London had been moved to large facilities like hotels, theaters, movie theaters, and churches. They weren't even allowed to stay in their own homes. It almost sounded like a joke, but it had been reported that civilians would be fired upon if they left the specified buildings and facilities. England itself had not made an official announcement regarding the situation, but the theory that a coup d'etat had occurred seemed the most likely.

(But didn't he go to France before…?)

For an instant, Mikoto was seized with an ominous feeling, but she shook her head to clear it.

That kind of thing couldn't just keep happening.

"Do you even know how much trouble the formalities for leaving Academy City are? Even the procedure for Academy City authorized events like wide area public visits is a pain to go through."

"Yeah, well, I really am in London."

He must have been having problems of his own, because she could hear the sound of him lightly scratching at his head over the phone.

"And I'm serious about having to do something about this shutter…"

"I don't know what you've gotten yourself wrapped up in, but that isn't something you should ask a girl."

In response to her exasperated response, she just heard him groan over the phone for a bit.

Then Kamijou Touma spoke a single short sentence in a careless way.

"…You can't do it?"

“I didn’t say that,” Mikoto replied without thinking.

Part 6

“Hmm, that would be a Marvelous Lock 225 Passive. Remove two of the clasps below the panel and the maintenance jack should come out.”

Five seconds after sending a cell phone picture of the electronic lock’s panel to Mikoto, she had given that response.

“Uuh…” Kamijou responded in shock at her immediate comment. “Hey, isn’t technology outside Academy City 20 or 30 years off from the technology inside? Do you really know about the stuff from outside, too?”

“Marvelous Lock is a company that cooperates with Academy City, so the technology used is the same just with lowered specs,” Mikoto said lightly. “I wouldn’t know exactly what to do with a lock that was solely developed outside, but I’m not saying I wouldn’t be able to open it either. After all, the technology would be at a level of 20 to 30 years ago. Even the security in a military research facility outside of Academy City would be lower than the login management on a completely outdated computer in Academy City.”

“…And I can’t even open a padlock.”

“Well, you’re at the technological level of the Edo period.”

As they spoke back and forth, Kamijou operated the electronic lock’s panel as instructed.

“I know I’m the one that asked you…but you really do know what you’re doing with this kind of thing, don’t you?”

“D-don’t misunderstand. I only taught myself all this to make sure I didn’t interfere with the functioning of an electronic lock if my power were to malfunction. It isn’t like I want to be a sneak thief or a cracker or something.”

“Hey, do you think you could tell me what to do a little more slowly?”

His fingertips were moving all over the place while he also used a handkerchief to make sure he didn’t get any fingerprints on it, but he just couldn’t keep up with what she was telling him.

Then he heard a noise from within the lock followed by the shutter clattering as it rose. It may have been because there was no one on the street outside, but the noise seemed especially loud. This brought a bad feeling to Kamijou and Index’s hearts, but it seemed the knights didn’t hear it.

“It opened! Thanks, Misaka!”

“Okay, but you owe me one now.”

“Sure thing. Anyway, I’m in a hurry!”

“Eh? Wait! With the Ichihanaransai preparations, we’re going to be having more half days, right? So, um, if I manage my time, I’ll have a lot of time to kill and-…!”

She had started to say something quickly, but the connection had suddenly died. Kamijou looked down at the screen questioningly and saw that the antenna had zero signal.

(…Well, if it was something important, she can just call me back later.)

Kamijou put the phone back in his pocket. They had to enter the subway tunnel through the station and destroy the magical barrier with Villian’s help.

Villian herself was staring at the opened shutter with one hand on her cheek and a look of pure admiration in her eyes.

“That’s the city on the forefront of technology for you… You can even do that with just some help from a friend.”

“Y-yes, well, she is the #3 Biri Biri, so she’s pretty reliable with this kind of thing. …Hey, Index, why do you look so upset?”

“…No reason,” responded Index before she finally started moving and walked up next to Kamijou.

However, she decided to add in a light kick to Kamijou’s shin as a bonus.

(??? What’s with that pissed off aura?)

Kamijou was full of questions, but Index’s aura told him that a careless response could send her into an explosion of biting, so he didn’t say anything more.

Kamijou turned his gaze forward.

The shutter was supposed to be lowered, so there were no lights on within the station. However, the occasional light to an emergency exit or evacuation route kept the area from being completely dark. Those lights were installed directly on the floor, so it felt like they could walk through the passageway without a flashlight.

After heading forward a bit, Kamijou turned back around.

(…Come to think of it, maybe we should close the shutter again.)

He then remembered that he didn’t know how to open or close it. He would have to call Mikoto to close it and then call her again when they were escaping.

“What is it?”

“Nothing. …Yeah, if we run into trouble in the tunnel and have to flee, we won’t have time to ask Misaka for help.”

“?”

Villian tilted her head in puzzlement, but Kamijou didn’t say anything more on the matter.

As they headed down the stairs to the subway platform, there was still no sign of anyone else there. Kamijou wasn’t really an expert at detecting hidden enemies,

but the area was wrapped in such silence, that it felt like he would hear even the breathing of an enemy if one was hidden there.

Kamijou, Index, and Villian continued in the opposite direction than the one indicated by the lights for the emergency exits and evacuation routes.

After making it down to the platform, they finally saw the glow of fluorescent lights.

However, these were not the lights on the ceiling. The tunnel and the station must have been on different electrical systems because only the fluorescent lights on the tunnel wall past the platform were lit.

Of course, that wasn't enough light to illuminate the entire platform.

It was like a hospital after lights out.

Kamijou leaned forward from the edge of the platform and looked into the tunnel with fluorescent lights installed at set intervals.

"I know its past time for the last train, but I still don't like jumping down there…"

However, they couldn't just stop there.

Kamijou and Index climbed down onto the track, but Villian didn't seem able to get down easily due to her long princess's skirt getting in the way. To help support her, Kamijou held out his hands, but she unexpectedly put her entire weight on them causing him to topple over onto the track.

"S-sorry. I don't know the proper etiquette for situations like this…"

"D-d-d-d-don't worry!! And I doubt there's a Q&A or a lesson in manners school to teach you how to climb down from a subway platform!! But it would probably be best if you got away from me a bit, Lady Villian!!"

"Touma, that's lèse majesté."

Index's cold words pierced Kamijou's heart and Villian apologized profusely as she hurriedly moved off of him.

Kamijou stood back up and looked deep into the tunnel.

It seemed the point the Amakusas had designated was only a few dozen meters down. However, it was in the opposite direction of Buckingham Palace.

“This way?”

“Yes. I have heard of it, but I have never actually seen it,” Villian said with a slightly tense expression on her face.

That was when Kamijou and the others heard footsteps from behind.

“!?”

The three of them hurriedly turned around.

(The knights…!?)

For an instant, he was reminded of the New Light magician Lessar whose shoulder had been split from a long distance attack. He wasn’t sure if he could defend against that type of spiritual item with just his right hand.

However, his guess had been wrong. Kamijou had taken up a position to protect both Index and Villian, but the princess spoke from behind him.

“P-please wait! They are not our enemy. Those are the servants from Buckingham Palace who had planned to meet up with us.”

“…That voice. Lady Villian…?” asked a questioning voice.

Perhaps because Villian had just spoken to Kamijou in Japanese, the voice coming from the darkness was also speaking Japanese.

A number of other figures started to appear. Almost 20 men and women had come to the station via the tunnel. From an old man in faded work clothes to a girl wearing a maid uniform, it was a varied group.

Villian moved past Kamijou and looked at each of their faces.

“Is this everyone?”

A maid of about 20 nodded.

“The numbers of the night shift are kept low and some of those, well… accompanied you to Folkestone. This is everyone who was in Buckingham Palace of a civilian background.”

“I see…”

Villian’s expression grew cloudy at the mention of Folkestone.

As she did not open her mouth to speak, Kamijou did instead.

“You all are going to escape to London with us after this, right?”

“Yes. We wish we could deal with the device within the tunnel so Lady Villian did not have to worry about it, but we don’t understand how the mysterious things known as magic work and we aren’t told any of the Royal Family’s secrets. We asked to help knowing full well how dangerous it is.”

“I see,” Kamijou said and nodded.

(In that case, we need to hurry up and get this job over with and get them somewhere safe.)

Kamijou then headed into the tunnel in the opposite direction from Buckingham Palace where their target lay a few dozen meters in.

The group of over 20 people walked through the tunnel half holding their breath.

As usual, both walls were made of concrete with fluorescent lights installed at set intervals. There were 2 tracks on both sides and the pillars supporting the tunnel were lined up at set intervals in the center.

“According to Tatemiya and Kanzaki, there’s a track that branches off from the main track for the special railway car, but…”

Kamijou looked around.

As far as he could tell, no such entrance existed.

With an unsure expression on her face, Villian looked around, too.

“This is definitely the area.”

“You can tell?”

“No, um…This is at least where it should be.”

Villian’s tone grew weaker and weaker, but then Index cut in.

“There is a mark here made with magic power. It’s most likely here so the magicians who have to maintain it won’t forget where it is.”

“Th-that’s right. Now that you mention it, there is supposed to be a mark showing where it is. Umm…I need something to write with…”

A maid pulled out and handed her some annoying-to-use stationary made up of a high quality letter set and a quill. The maid continued to hold the ink bottle.

The third princess frowned and hesitatingly moved the quill.

“Yes, I think it was…like this. A mark like this shows where it is. My knowledge of magic is not the best, so I don’t actually know what it means.”

The stationary she held out held what looked like some kind of symbol and Kamijou had no idea what it meant. It didn’t even have the extremely foreign feeling that a magic circle had. It was at the level where he would have believed someone if they had told him it was a rare mark used on maps.

However, one person frowned upon seeing the stationary Villian was holding out. That person was the mass of magical knowledge that was Index.

“What is it, Index?”

“Nothing. It’s just odd. Why would they use the ‘heart’ as a symbol of warning?” she muttered, but Kamijou couldn’t quite pick up what she was saying.

At any rate, they had to look around to see if they could find the mark Villian had drawn. Having come to that conclusion, the group split up and started checking the walls and floor of the tunnel. The servants helped too because all they had to do was find the mark.

(The fluorescent lights are enough to walk around, but they really aren't bright enough to search for a small mark. We knew we had to enter a tunnel, so we really should have prepared a light.)

Staring intently in the dim lighting, Kamijou walked slowly along the wall.

Once they found the mark, it would be Kamijou's turn. No matter how strong a spell it was protected by, he should be able to easily destroy it with Imagine Breaker.

Then, the fingers of Kamijou's right hand touched something that felt different.

"?"

Removing his hand from the wall, he stared into the darkness again to find what looked like a poster. It was about two meters tall and one meter across. In the dim light, he couldn't tell what was written on it, but the tape on the upper right corner must have come off because it was flipped up. Kamijou stared at that portion.

(Huh…?)

He frowned.

He leaned in closer to the poster to see what it said.

(Was this here before?)

And then he saw it.

It was not a poster.

It was a wall.

Something thin the exact same color and texture of the tunnel wall had been stuck there. It was like the large pieces of wallpaper ninja often used to hide themselves with in cheap historical dramas.

"This is…?"

As soon as Kamijou muttered that, something moved.

He heard a whooshing noise.

Pale beams of light shot from the center of the wallpaper across the height and width of the tunnel wall. A grid of rectangles the exact same size as the “poster” spread out instantly.

“This is…!?”

“Touma!!” Index yelled having noticed what happened, but something interrupted her.

It was the sound of paper rubbing against paper.

One wall of the tunnel seemed to undulate. Just when Kamijou put himself on guard, each of the square portions of the grid flipped up like posters, tore off, and formed a giant aggregation of paper.

A few of those pieces of paper fell to the ground like dead leaves.

They were most likely the pieces he had touched with his right hand or that had been destroyed in a sort of chain reaction from that.

However, the others powerfully floated through the air.

(A magical…barrier.)

Kamijou almost burst out laughing.

The sound of paper being crumpled in the hand of a giant reverberated throughout the tunnel.

“I knew magic went beyond any kind of common sense I would have.”

The enormous amount of paper that was spiraling around like a storm in an office finally concentrated on one spot. On top of that, they were all acting in concert.

“But I never imagined a wall would take on the form of a human and attack me!!”

Part 7

When the pieces of paper covering one wall of the tunnel moved away, the entrance to a new half-circle shaped tunnel appeared. To forcibly connect it to the main track, the new tunnel even had a special rail that extended like a fire engine's ladder.

However, a giant made of paper blocked the way.

It was around 3 meters tall.

Paper normally gave an impression of being light, but…

"!?"

The giant swung its fist horizontally crashing straight through one of the tunnel's pillars without losing its momentum and continued on heading straight towards Kamijou's cheek. The fist was covered in masses of concrete each one larger than a school bag, so Kamijou abandoned the idea of intercepting it with his right hand. Practically falling backwards, he managed to avoid the first strike.

He then heard a short, high-pitched scream. He guessed it had either come from one of the maids or from Third Princess Villian. As a giant was currently trying to beat him to death, Kamijou didn't have the attention to spare.

He looked at the paper giant that had destroyed a pillar of concrete in a single blow.

Bundles of paper must have been moving within its body because what almost looked like hard muscles rose to the surface.

(Dammit! It may just be paper, but it gains some actual weight with that much of

it!!)

It was a bit like swinging around a bookshelf packed with thick books. The giant's arm could literally pulverize a human or two.

"Touma, get away from it! That's a spiritual item based on the creation of Mökkurkalfe!" Index yelled from a bit away.

Before Kamijou could ask what that was, she explained it.

"Mökkurkalfe is a prefabricated giant from Norse mythology! It was designed to fight against Thor who was known for having top-class strength even among the Norse gods, but the story goes that, at the very, very end, the wrong material was used for the 'heart', which led to poor results. This is an optimized custom model made to protect this location by rethinking the materials from the ground up using British theories! I think the symbol Villian wrote before was the symbol that was newly set for the 'heart'!!"

(Yet another thing with a long history!!)

Kamijou clicked his tongue and the paper giant made its next move.

Kamijou instinctually tried to get some distance between him and the giant, but the giant kicked the ruins of the pillar it had previously destroyed. A soccer ball sized piece struck Kamijou's jaw from below like an uppercut.

"Gah…!?"

Kamijou bent backwards and he tasted blood spreading through his mouth.

However, the paper giant did not stop there.

Using its huge legs, it closed the distance between them with a single large step. All of Kamijou's weight was tilted back leaving him defenseless and this time the giant fist made of paper that held more weight than a bookshelf flew up at him.

It seemed like a hopeless situation, but…

(…This is my chance.)

Kamijou immediately poured strength into his right fist.

When the paper giant made actual contact with him was the best chance for Kamijou to attack with Imagine Breaker. If he missed, he'd be turned to mincemeat, but if he managed to hit the attacking paper fist, he could counterattack.

(Don't chicken out….Go!!)

Two fists roared through the air.

Kamijou's right fist struck the very center of the huge fist that could easily turn a car to scrap in a single strike. In that instant, the giant fist stopped moving. Whatever was holding the paper together was undone and the giant turned into a flood of paper. Tens and even hundreds of posters flowed down and half buried Kamijou. With an eerie noise, he was swept over to the tunnel wall as if he were caught in a stream of water.

"Gh…!? Fuck, did I do it!?"

Pain ran through his back and head. Kamijou tried to move his limbs, but he felt as restricted as someone wrapped in a futon. At any rate, now that it had turned back into a bunch of paper, the Mökkur-whatever shouldn't be able to function. He could just wait for Index or someone to help him out of the mountain of paper.

But then…

The sound of paper being crumpled up sent a chill down his spine.

"You're kidding, right…?"

When he looked over, he saw a strange silhouette. A minimum amount of paper had been crumpled up to form strings of paper that created wire-like limbs and a backbone. In contrast to that, its face was just as large as before.

The wrinkles that looked like a human face formed and its right arm moved back like a giant bow about to be fired. It no longer had a powerful fist. However, it now had a sharp stake-like tip.

(Oh, shit. I can’t move! I can’t get away!!)

With his body restrained by the large amount of paper, Kamijou couldn’t even budge.

The paper giant carefully aimed its right stake at the center of Kamijou’s face.

Without hesitation, it shot the stake that could likely break through a wall.

(Fuck!!)

That was when a figure suddenly cut in from the side.

It was one of the servants who had come from Buckingham Palace. A middle-aged gardener wearing faded work clothes attempted to grab the paper giant’s arm somehow managing to throw its aim off a bit.

Thanks to that, Kamijou’s head was not smashed.

The stake arm instead stabbed deep into the concrete wall next to his head.

However, the gardener did not escape unharmed.

He had attempted to restrain the paper giant’s arm, but he had been knocked away by the great force. On top of that, the paper giant’s body was as tough as layers upon layers of hardened paste, so it was as hard as stone. The gardener’s work clothes were torn and he shed a fair amount of blood too.

Kamijou felt more fear for the man’s life than he did gratitude for being saved.

“You idiot!! That was completely reckless…!!” Kamijou yelled as he continued to struggle in an attempt to free himself from the mountain of paper that was as heavy as a collapsed bookshelf.

Hearing that, the collapsed gardener smiled. It was the face of someone glad to see that someone else was worried about them.

“…Sorry. I don’t know anything about magic, but we can oppose this thing with your power, right?”

With a creaking noise, the paper giant attempted to pull the stake from the wall.

Broken shards fell to the ground from the cracked concrete.

“So please. Do something about that thing. Do something before its ridiculous stake is turned on Lady Villian!!”

Part 8

The servants had protectively stepped forward in front of Villian when the paper giant had appeared. When those servants heard what the gardener said, they seemed to relax a bit.

Villian’s body stiffened with a very terrible feeling about what was to come.

She had felt that terrible feeling many times already that night.

A young female servant turned back towards Villian and spoke as if to prove the third princess’s intuition true.

“Leave this to us, Lady Villian.”

“…!?”

“If we can buy enough time for that boy to recover, we can turn this around. We may not know how to fight, but surely 20 people can keep it from moving by crushing it.”

That was definitely the normal way of thinking.

However, Villian knew something despite not knowing very much about magic: the strange phenomena she had witnessed before her eyes had not followed normal laws. Even if 20 powerless civilians charged in, it would use its normally unthinkable strength to destroy them.

The servants were not idiots.

Even if they couldn't calculate out the numbers, the things they had experienced since the start of the coup d'etat should have been enough for them to guess at the truth.

However, they did not say anything about that.

It was as if they did not want to worry Villian.

A certain servant took off his coat in a manner that showed he felt he had no choice. A certain cook took off his tie and wrapped it around his fists in order to protect his hands as much as he could. A certain clothes designer glanced over towards the exit, but still managed to draw out enough courage to look back towards the paper giant. All of their faces had paled and their entire bodies were trembling.

They were of course scared, but they were still choosing to head to their likely deaths.

"Why…?" Villian asked them without thinking.

"There is no real reason," said a young female servant with a bitter smile on her lips. "The reasons people feel the need to take action are not so special. We gathered here because we wanted to fight for you. That's all there is to it, Lady Villian."

That was when the paper giant made its next move. It must have decided that pulling out the stake from the wall next to Kamijou Touma's head was impossible because the paper making up the tip of its arm fell apart on its own. Having regained its freedom by sacrificing part of itself, the paper giant sharpened the tip of its arm again.

It was going to make sure to kill Kamijou Touma this time.

It was going to eliminate the boy who had a method of resisting it.

Seeing that, the servants began to move.

Then Third Princess Villian placed her hand lightly on a young servant's

shoulder.

“I understand how you all feel.”

Due to some strong power, she understood how they felt more than she ever had before.

“But that reason does not make it all right for you to die. If that spiritual item is set to eliminate the threats to the barrier that itself is in order of priority, then I am the best option for a lure.”

As soon as she finished speaking, Villian ran forward.

The princess who had been hiding behind people’s backs the entire time now moved in front of everyone.

“Wait…!!”

The servants behind her yelled out to stop her, but none of them physically tried to hold her back. They likely hadn’t been able to react in time to her sudden action. Also, their fear was probably preventing them from using their legs properly.

Of course they were afraid.

Of course they wanted to flee.

Gritting her teeth, Villian ran through the dark tunnel. A large wrench about the size of a mop was sitting next to the wall. It was likely used to manually switch the rails in emergencies. She grabbed it with both hands and ran further ahead. She ran and ran and ran in a direct line to the giant. As she approached, she poured all of her strength into the heavy wrench.

The servant had said that the reasons people feel the need to take action were not so special. Villian wanted to believe that that was true, so she swung the large wrench horizontally at the paper giant’s head.

“Oooohhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

As she swung the wrench, Villian let out a yell the likes of which she had never

before uttered in public.

In response, the paper giant took action as well.

The spiritual item changed the aim of its arm that was sharpened like a stake and fired the tip at the approaching wrench. With a dull clang, a shock ran through Villian's head.

The stake had not hit her.

The wrench had broken almost exactly in half and one side had struck her in the face.

(To Carissa, this thing is probably a complete weakling that does not even have the same amount of power as her pinky finger. If she saw us struggling here, she would surely ridicule us for our incompetence.)

Villian was knocked backwards to the ground, but her gaze did not waver.

She threw away the remains of the broken wrench.

The Amakusas had said that someone from the Royal Family was needed to open the magical barrier and they had lectured her on the spell needed to do that.

(But if even this tiny power is going to injure those who will stand up to support me and if my sister whose overwhelming power makes this fearsome power seem "tiny" is going to make people suffer…)

She just had to activate it.

Villian acted in order to carry out this magic on her own.

The paper giant itself was the barrier protecting the subway tunnel and the special railway car for Curtana. And Villian knew that the barrier could be controlled by the Royal Family's magic.

That was why Villian decided to charge forward.

She would show that paper giant that she was a member of the British Royal Family.

She was doing it to save the servants who had come with her and to send Curtana Original out of control to save the United Kingdom from Carissa!!

Normally, the third princess might have been shaking from fear and might have had tears welling up in her eyes, but she clearly glared at the paper giant.

(I will oppose you!! I will oppose you to the very last instant no matter what!!)

However, the paper giant aimed its stake-like arm at Villian before she could stand up. The third princess ignored it. In the time she could have spent evading or defending, she quickly and desperately chanted a spell under her breath.

No voice could be heard.

The paper giant was merely automatically eliminating external enemies as a spiritual item.

Its stake-like arm flew.

It was accurately headed straight for Villian's face.

And then…

"C A O! M A R A T T R!! (Alter the trajectory! Move the right arm right!!)"

Index's voice came from somewhere and the stake unnaturally strayed from its route suddenly. It flew right past Villian's face and stabbed deeply into the concrete floor.

Then the third princess's chant caught up.

Strictly speaking, Villian had managed to complete the chant by taking Index's advice partway through and switching over to a Quick Spell.

"O A G P A T A C O T P O T R B!! (In accordance with the order of one who has inherited the proper blood, open quickly!!)"

Along with those final words, most of the paper giant's body started to fall to pieces.

However, its right arm kept its form and attempted to pierce Villian's face with

its sharp end as if in its death agonies.

The third princess did not flinch.

Then…

“Thanks. You saved me, Villian.”

The paper giant’s arm stopped moving.

The boy’s hand had forcefully grabbed the giant’s upper arm from behind as if he had been trying to stop a fight.

The giant crumbled further.

It turned back towards him even while continuing to lose its original form because it had determined that his right hand was more of a threat.

“Leave the rest to me. This time, I’ll end this here.”

Kamijou Touma vs. the paper giant.

The fight did not even last an instant.

Imagine Breaker vs. the stake-like arm.

Two strikes that possessed the power to immediately kill the other were thrown without hesitation.

A loud noise rang out.

This time, Kamijou Touma’s fist managed to destroy the entirety of the paper giant.

It had been just barely managing to maintain its human form already and the papers scattered about explosively starting with the place Kamijou’s fist had struck. The large number of rectangular parchments were blown almost to the tunnel’s ceiling and then slowly floated down due to gravity.

“…”

Third Princess Villian stared at the scene speechless for a bit.

She stared at the large number of parchments floating through the air as a result of the first action she had ever taken in an attempt to defeat a clear enemy.

Kamijou had no idea what she was thinking about.

He decided to leave her be for a bit and then he felt his cell phone vibrating.

He didn't recognize the number, but he heard a familiar voice when he put the phone up to his ear.

"Oh, good. It got through!"

"That voice…Itsuwa?"

"Y-yes! Good evening! This is Itsuwa finally completely free of the alcohol!!"

"?"

Kamijou looked puzzled at how energetic Itsuwa was, but she of course had no way of knowing that.

"The plan was a success. Now that you, Lady Villian, and the others have released the lock on the magical barrier, the special railway car's power source can be accessed remotely."

"I see. So you can directly attack Curtana Original now."

"About that… The special railway car for Curtana is heading your way at tremendous speed to move underneath Buckingham Palace! So please get out of the way!!"

Kamijou's expression turned to one of shock and Itsuwa continued speaking.

"A-anyway, we are going to link the center of air fortress Coven Compass with Curtana Original via the special railway car. The reversing of the flow of power will create a large scale release of magic power. Most likely, the knights will detect the abnormality and head there to investigate and *there is also a major risk of getting caught up in an explosion if you stay there*! Please head back as

quickly as you can!!”

Part 9

October 18th, 2:30 AM.

Control of Curtana Original was lost.

An explosion with a radius of 50 kilometers erupted with Buckingham Palace at the center. However, it was a completely magical explosion that the normal people who lived there could not even detect.

The glass vibrated slightly. It appeared to be reacting to sound waves so low humans could not detect them.

Then there was the sound of blood being coughed up.

A mass of blood fell dirtying a luxurious carpet within the palace.

It was Second Princess Carissa’s blood.

“…A forced reversal from Coven Compass, huh?”

Even with all of the power from the center of the sky fortress thrown at it, it still hadn’t even been a tenth of the power Curtana Original controlled. However, the irregular power being forced in had acted as a stimulus to send Curtana itself in a bad direction. Having lost its stability, fragments of power leaked from Curtana Original. These fragments damaged Carissa’s body much like a blade stuffed in a bag tearing its way out.

(This is why I said merely controlling “most” of the major areas wasn’t enough. I told them not to let their guard down until we had crushed “all” of them… No,

maybe I should be in awe of their cunning tactics.)

Most of the power distributed to the knights with Curtana Original had been lost.

Some of Carissa's own power had been lost, too.

In fact, about half of it had been torn from her.

But…

(I suppressed it.)

Carissa was confident about one thing.

Most likely, they had come up with that plan because they had determined that sending Curtana out of control would act as a foothold in overthrowing her due to loss of Curtana Original during the Puritan Revolution. However, she would not be defeated. That had not been enough to provide fatal damage to Carissa's power.

"L-Lady Carissa," a knight called out from the other side of the large doorway. "The recovery and resealing of the special railway car beneath the palace has been completed. Now the church cannot interfere with Curtana Original anymore."

"Hm." Carissa wiped the remaining blood from her lips with the back of her hand. "Then check to see what effect the power scattered around by Curtana Original had on London. Then check over all the spiritual items stored in the palace. It's possible about half of them are now completely unusable."

Carissa once again grabbed the sword with no blade or tip.

"Bring out the tools for working on spiritual items. I need to run another check on Curtana Original. Because of this, I will put the readjustments to and changes in usage of Curtana Original on hold. Rather than worrying about tricks against Curtana, we need to focus on exterminating the remaining pockets of resistance across the country."

"Understood," said the knight before he left.

At first glance, he seemed obedient, but Carissa had noticed a disturbance in the balance of the scales in his heart.

The knights were a group that obeyed Knight Leader and Carissa had used Knight Leader as a point of contact with the knights. Now that he was gone, a disturbance within the knights was spreading below the surface and a small rift had appeared between Carissa and the knights.

And now she had lost control of Curtana Original.

It had been due to sabotage carried out by the Anglican Church, but Carissa had an idea of what she would see if she could peek in the knights' hearts. They now saw her as someone who could not control Curtana.

They had already lost their direct leader and now she had shown a sign of being "inferior".

If the former queen Elizard and the church conspired together and started a large-scale opposition at this time, she wasn't sure if the knights would be able to stick with it. It had nothing to do with the fact that Carissa's side had a clear mathematical advantage. It was an emotional problem. Would they continue to believe that they could win? Would they continue to believe in Carissa as the head of state?

(Well, if an opposition does begin now, about half of them will probably crack.)

Even after making that blunt calculation, Carissa smiled thinly.

As she smiled, she rested Curtana Original on her shoulder.

(Now then. I have no need for cowards, but having them change sides would be a pain. …Maybe I should take the initiative and strike first.)

Part 10

Tatemiya Saiji of the Amakusa Church held a pair of binoculars.

He was in a plain on the outskirts of London well beyond the range of Curtana's explosion. It was unclear how much was a manmade pasture and how much was land where nature had been preserved, but it was a place with nothing but green undergrowth spreading out in all directions. In a certain spot there, members of the Anglican Church had gathered from various parts of the United Kingdom.

"Well, crap. We did succeed in weakening Curtana Original to a certain extent, but it looks like we weren't able to avoid a reaction from it."

Tatemiya was standing on the type of stepladder that gardeners liked. He was staring into the distance with his binoculars looking a bit like a referee at a tennis match.

The large Ushibuka spoke in a low voice from below the stepladder.

"That's because a large amount of Telesma was emitted in all directions with the second princess at the center. It appears to have had an effect on the spiritual items and facilities within London. And it seems like at least 3 small churches were destroyed."

"If the readings from the observation equipment remaining in St. George's Cathedral are accurate, the Telesma hanging over London is incredibly dense. If magic were used within London right now, there is a risk of causing an explosion enveloping the entire city," said the small Kouyagi as he wrote some numbers down in a notebook.

Tatemiya nodded while still staring through the binoculars.

"The second princess's control over the knights had already been cracking with the loss of Knight Leader, so their trust in her has truly started to slip now that she lost control of Curtana Original as well. If only we could press in there now. Then we might be able to mentally bring down the knights without actually having to fight them."

The old Isahaya took over.

"…It looks like we can only wait until the Telesma naturally diffuses making

London stable before we attack. Is it possible that Curtana Original's power could be restored and the knights could focus their strength on defending Buckingham Palace in that time?"

"I'm not so sure about the knights, but Curtana shouldn't be a problem. The power it uses is simply too strong, so its power cannot be restored so easily after such a catastrophic failure. Given the amount of power it is theorized to control, it should take at least a month."

"Then…"

"Then we both have a short break. But this break will double as a preparatory period for the final battle."

Tension ran across all of them and someone audibly gulped.

And then…

"If you know that, then take your job seriously," said a woman with fluffy blonde hair, Tsushima, from a short distance away.

In response, Tatemiya and the other guys pouted and objected.

"Quit accusing us of things like that."

"That's right! We're having a completely serious strategy meeting here."

"We need as many opinions as we can get in this critical moment."

"Yes. We need to know for sure we've chosen the proper course of action."

The guys let their unanimous opinion wash over Tsushima, but her attitude did not change. She tapped at her own temple with her slender index finger and shut one eye.

"Then why are those binoculars pointed in the direction of Itsuwa and her apron?"

And so the last supper began.

The Necessarius members who had escaped London, the Amakusas who had arrived on the rescue plane, the former Agnese Forces members that had been rescued from the freight train, and others from various different religious denominations and cultures gathered in that one spot.

The nuns moving about around Kamijou were exchanging information.

“The Theodosia Electra group has arrived. It seems almost all of the Anglican forces from around England have gathered now.”

“The Stiyl Magnus group isn’t here yet. They had borrowed that transport plane for the Sky Bus 365 incident, but it seems they ended up in a battle at the airport once the coup d’etat broke out. They were bragging about having won out without any help, but it might take them a while longer to get here.”

From what he heard, it sounded like almost all of the remaining forces were gathered here.

The Anglican magicians were preparing and fine-tuning the weapons and spiritual items they used while at the same time preparing their bodies (mainly by eating). Due to the commotion caused by the coup d’etat, some had no stamina left because of the long fights and flights while others had skipped dinner assuming they would eat later and missed the chance to eat then too.

And with so many different people gathered, a lot of different types of food were gathered for them to eat.

“O-oh, wow! This soup…This hot soup is spreading beyond my stomach and into my entire body!!”

“U-umm, we’re going to be active soon, so you shouldn’t eat too much…”

“I can’t just eat a light salad at a time like this!! I’ve gotta have some heavy meat like this that drops into your stomach like a bowling ball!!”

“I’m saying you should only eat until your stomach is 80% full. If you fill up completely…”

“Another!! I’m definitely getting another one of these!!”

“Ch-chew properly. Eat slowly to make sure you don’t surprise your stomach.”

“Myahh!!”

Innumerable nuns both big and small had entered a very un-nun-like gluttonous mode while Itsuwa nervously darted back and forth in between them wearing an apron. Kamijou felt a bit bad when he noticed that it seemed even his cat was greedily devouring some food.

He stood almost speechless holding a small plate with nothing on it feeling unable to keep up with the rush of nuns and magicians.

Meanwhile, two gluttonous nuns, Index and Angelene, were sitting together at a table a bit away from the commotion. At first glance, they seemed to be happily sitting next to each other eating, but…

“Wah!! Y-you just ate my food, didn’t you? Didn’t you!?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Y-you saw her, right, Sister Lucia!? This glutton just reached her fork over to my plate!!”

The tall cat-eyed nun sitting across from Angelene sighed. (Lucia hadn’t seen it because she had been giving a prayer before eating and didn’t really care).

“Sister Angelene. You are supposed to love your neighbors and not doubt others.”

“Mgh!? W-well, yes… But I could have sworn she just ate some of my food…”

“Chomp.”

“Now you clearly just stole my food!! That wasn’t just looking for an opening and sneaking it away! You ate my meatball right in front of me!!”

“No, I didn’t. Burp.”

“You said that on purpose!! S-Sister Lucia, please say something to her!!”

In response to Angelene who was almost in tears, Lucia tilted her own plate over

as if she had no choice.

“Then take some of my food. You need to get rid of your triple handicap of wrath, gluttony, and envy.”

“Gyahhh!! That’s nothing but vegetables and bitter ones at that! Sister Lucia, are you the kind of person that brings her trials and tribulations to the dinner table!?”

Angelene took a timid bite and then started writhing around, so Lucia hurriedly handed her some vegetable juice, but a sip of that only made it worse. While the bent-backed nun with the braided hair was practically convulsing, Index left on a quest for more food.

However, calamity awaited Index as well in the form of the many Anglican nuns near the table lined with meat.

“Oh, how nostalgic!! Do you remember me? It’s Rachel. We used to always play together. Oh, right. Do you want a Salisbury steak?”

“Munch munch. Who are you and why are you pinching at my cheek?”

“Heh heh heh. It looks like Rachel has completely forgotten that you lost your memories. I suppose you don’t remember me, but that’s fine. Are you as much of a glutton as ever? Here, do you want this food?”

“Mgh!? I just ate a Salisbury steak!! Munch munch.”

“Ahhh!! She’s so cute! She’s just too cute with food stuffed in her cheeks like that!! Here, eat my Salisbury steak, too!!”

“…Ughh. I-I don’t think I need anymore…”

The silver haired, green eyed nun spoke words that were very rarely heard from her. However, more Anglican nuns added to the clamors of “Me, too. Me, too!” “Eat mine, too!!” “Let me feed her, too!!”

Meanwhile, an emotional crisis fell on the normal girl that was Itsuwa while she provided people with various foods.

A certain boy was quite nearby.

The potato shochu had been completely broken down within her body and she was back to normal.

However, the giant wave of requests for food from the nuns prevented her from doing anything else. That was not something she could bear as a maiden in love. (And her love was not just for show or due to drunkenness. She was seriously prepared to die for him.)

Then rescue arrived in the form of Tsushima, the Amakusa woman with fluffy blonde hair.

“Ah. You’re clearly not working very effectively, so I’ll switch out with you. Look, I think that boy wasn’t able to get any food because of all the starving nuns. If you go bring him some food, you might gain a few points.”

“Ah, that’s…n-no!! I don’t want to do that!! I don’t really…!”

“You don’t like taking calculated actions? But if you keep saying that, you’ll never get any closer to him.”

“But after all that fighting I’m all beaten up and sweaty. I can’t face him looking like this…”

Perhaps because she was talking to another woman, Itsuwa let a glimpse of her true self be seen in her mutterings.

But then some unneeded guys butted into the conversation.

“Tah dah!! Itsuwa, you need to go with the Cinderella Plan!! It’s an advance sale roadshow!!”

“Wh-why are you suddenly jumping in here and talking about a roadshow? I don’t understa-hic!?”

Itsuwa hiccupped at the end because her breathing had caught for a second due to intense shock. While letting out noises that couldn't exactly be called words, Itsuwa pointed a trembling finger at what Tatemiya was holding.

Held out in both his hands was…

"Yes!! It's the Great Spirit Revealing Maid!!"

"Wha-cough!? Cough cough!! T-T-Tatemiya-san, why do you have the final weapon!?"

"Heh. I'm well aware that you want someone to give you a push forward. The designer is actually based in London, so I went by to pick it up just after the coup d'etat started. That way, I managed to get it way before its release date."

"How did you have the time to spare to do something like that!? And how did you get my personal information!?"

Itsuwa was freaking out at how perfectly it matched her measurements, but she also saw it as the key to putting on a major offensive towards "that boy", so she couldn't bring herself to just throw it to the ground.

Meanwhile, Kanzaki Kaori was sitting a few meters away having finally recovered her strength. She let out a sigh of relief making sure no one else would hear it.

"(…W-well, about half of my baggage never made it out of the women's dorm, so the Fallen Angel Ero Maid has likely been sent back to the darkness where it belongs. I don't care about the rest because I managed to bring my pet tropical fish and my friend the washing machine onboard the plane.)"

Kanzaki did not realize that she was muttering these things out loud.

Then Tatemiya spun around towards her at a speed that gave her a very bad feeling.

"Don't worry, Priestess!! I made sure to save your precious wedding dress!! I have both the Fallen Angel Maid and the Fallen Angel Ero Maid here, so take whichever one you wish!!"

“Why would you do thaaaaaaaaattttt!?”

Kanzaki accidentally yelled out loud at him upon seeing her nightmares properly wrapped up as if they had just returned from being dry cleaned. Seeing Tatemiya, Ushibuka, Kouyagi, and the others’ faces, she felt kind of stupid for having faced and been defeated by Knight Leader so seriously.

“I do not need these things!! And if you had time to enter the women’s dorm, then you should have taken my yukata or something out with you!!”

“You don’t need the Fallen Angel Ero Maid…? Y-you don’t mean…!! Do you have a Hyper Fallen Angel Extreme Ero Maid that goes even further!? …N-now I regret my effort.”

“I do not have anything like that!! Hyper!? Extreme Ero!? That completely loses sight of the original maid basis!! Are you people fine with anything as long as it has the ero part!?” Kanzaki yelled with a bright red face.

However, the Amakusa men had not risked their lives for a mere joke.

The true basis to their actions was…

“(…We’ve never actually seen the Priestess wearing the Fallen Angel Ero Maid! I can’t die happily until I do!!)”

“(…Yes, after the Acqua of the Back stuff, we were injured and writhing in pain on our beds. She cleverly worked it in during our one opening.)”

“(…I thought I was going to cry tears of blood when Itsuwa reported on what happened. I can’t believe something that sexy and hilarious went by without us seeing it.)”

“(…Nnh. With a once-in-a-hundred-years opportunity to see a showdown between the Fallen Angel Ero Maid and the Great Spirit Revealing Maid, it was worth risking our lives.)”

It wasn’t just the young Ushibuka and Kouyagi. The married Monozaki and the elderly Isahaya were joining in as well. Seeing this, Kanzaki Kaori began to seriously worry that her irresponsible departure had twisted the Amakusas in the wrong direction. Her thoughts were now more motherly than sisterly, but she

was still an 18 year old girl.

The effects continued to spread.

After having eaten bitter vegetables at Lucia's insistence allowing her to experience the feelings of a herbivore, Angelene's hands and mouth had stopped moving and she had tears in her eyes. She then started focusing on the infighting (?) within the Amakusa Church.

Angelene's leader, Agnese Sanctis, was sitting next to her having finished monopolizing a huge pizza covered in salami, wieners, and other meats which made Angelene incredibly jealous. Angelene now poked at Agnese's side with her elbow.

"S-Sister Agnese! It looks like that Eastern denomination is having an interesting discussion about wasting excessive breasts! Can we really just ignore that!?"

"Hm. So basically it's a contest to see who is the most mature by seeing who makes the sexiest maid? Since we have 250 nuns at our disposal, we can't exactly keep quiet here, but I also know we don't have anyone with breasts that excessive. Perhaps it would be most effective to decide on one person among our ranks to use as a countermeasure."

Kanzaki and Itsuwa would probably have attacked those nuns while breathing fire if they had heard those words, but that was not what mattered to Lucia. She only cared about the fact that Agnese and Angelene's gazes had turned in her direction.

Lucia had little feminine sexiness (although her breasts were quite large) and she tried to put a stop to what she saw coming.

"That isn't happening."

"I hear there is something called the Little Devil Flirting Maid."

"It seems you are going to attempt this despite my firm statement, but there is simply no way I will do this."

“It’s not a devil, it’s a little devil. Apparently, that has special meaning behind it.”

As they spoke back and forth, their speech sped up more and more.

A bit away, Sherry Cromwell sat silently watching the commotion. Her blonde hair was as wild as a lion’s mane and her skin was light brown. Her mostly black gothic lolita dress was worn out and it almost seemed to blend into the darkness of the night.

She had no food.

She had not been hungry.

What weighed heavily in her gut was the intense regret brought forth by self derision and self admonition.

She did not feel inferior to the knights.

In fact, she felt bad that she had been so heavily shaken by such insignificant bastards. No matter how much she mentally tried to deny it, they had eaten deeply into a supporting pillar within her. She felt that had been proven. She felt as if all the experiences and results she had worked so hard for had been snatched from her.

(This couldn’t be worse…)

As she internally spat out those words, Sherry lightly rubbed the bruises remaining on her light brown skin.

Sherry had sent out the Golem Ellis in order to crush the knights in London, but she had lost consciousness at some point. She couldn’t remember if she had been knocked out by a last ditch counterattack by the knights or by the female exhibitionist magician who had cut in partway through. All her hazy mind could remember was the female magician carrying her away from the battle.

A sluggish helplessness wrapped around Sherry Cromwell’s body.

A single figure slowly approached her.

“I have something for you.”

“Tch. So it’s you.”

The nun with the overly polite bearing was Orsola Aquinas. She had originally been a specialist at deciphering grimoires within the Roman Catholic Church, but the two of them had ended up being paired together for analysis work at some point.

Whether Orsola knew what was going on with Sherry or not, she had brought over a sandwich mostly filled with vegetables and was practically shoving it in her mouth.

“It looks like we are going to be busy from now on, so it is important that you eat while you can. It seems stamina could be a deciding factor in this battle.”

“…What a pain. Although, I could actually see myself dying for such a stupid reason…Bgh!? Don’t shove sandwiches in people’s mouths while smiling like tha-mghbgh!!”

Sherry started chewing to avoid suffocating to death and Orsola continued to smile while almost shoving the plate the sandwich was on into her mouth as well.

Sherry violently snatched the sandwich away.

“…I did hear that you were rather late in leaving the women’s dorm.”

“I was slowly working on something and everyone just left without me. We were told to only bring the bare minimum with us, but that turned out to be an unexpected amount.”

“Hah. That does sound like you.”

Sherry laughed.

However, there was no scorn or contempt held within it. After a few seconds of silence, she looked back at Orsola’s face.

“So one of the objects you risked your life to take out was this?”

Sherry kicked at something sitting on the short undergrowth.

It was a marble statue of a child.

Its pedestal said Ellis.

“A ha ha. So you found out.”

“You didn’t need to do that…” Sherry said displeased from the bottom of her heart. “You didn’t need to risk your life for this failed work. …In fact, it would have been refreshing to have this kind of thing disappear.”

“There is no reason that you have to force yourself to be refreshed.”

“…”

“Wiping away your regrets and denying the dead are not the same thing. I do not think it is right to cut yourself off from your past. There is no reason that people who treasure their memories of the dead should not have the right to have a new life and construct a new home.”

“…Don’t act like you understand,” Sherry muttered roughly, but she did not add on any other complaints.

She removed her foot from the statue of Ellis and looked at her failed work silently.

For a while, there was no noise.

It was a different sort of silence, a kind silence.

“Oh, that’s right.”

“What…?”

“Sherry, your dress seems to have become worn out from the repeated battles, so I prepared some clothes for you. I knew I made the right decision when I took every possible necessary thing from the women’s dorm.”

“I like this outfit, so I don’t mind if it’s a little worn ou-…Bghbh!?”

“Tah dah! Apparently, it’s called the Goddess Goth Maid!!”

“Don’t mock gothic outfits like that!! In fact, this has no connection other than being kind of Western-looking and old-looking!!”

“Oh?” said Orsola looking puzzled.

That reaction had seemed like a rare one for Sherry, but that brown golem user would often (especially in battle) get quite worked up.

It seemed even Orsola had figured out that the Goddess Goth Maid was disgraceful. As she held out the special maid uniform, she frowned.

“How very odd… The Amakusas are famous for being able to blend into every culture in the world and to know what is popular and they were just discussing the Fallen Angel Ero Maid and the Great Spirit Revealing Maid. I was sure that meant these were on the forefront of fashion…”

“Kh. Your sense of fashion is like that one of someone’s grandmother, so you’re no help at all!!”

“But it would be such a waste to just throw it away… Oh, I know. If no one else will wear it, then I suppose I have to.”

“Wait. Wait a second!! Stop that! Do you have any idea what will happen if someone as clueless as you with breasts that big puts on a maid uniform like that!? Just stop, you idiot!”

Part 11

A certain mercenary was in an area about a kilometer from the Anglican campground.

William Orwell stood next to a dairy facility with a small barn for dairy cows and a silo. The house for the farm family was built elsewhere, but it was completely empty.

The 3.5 meter 200 kilogram Ascalon with its many different blades was more delicate and complex than it initially looked. William checked over each little thing while occasionally taking it apart and adjusting it.

(…My left shoulder is more of an issue than the sword. I've used a bit of healing magic since then, but…)

William suddenly looked up much like a wolf reacting to a distant howl.

That impression was not actually a wrong one.

He had picked up on a magical transmission from a distance.

"Can you hear me, William?"

"…Hm. It seems we're rivals even when it comes to the strength of our bad luck," he said bluntly as his lips loosened so slightly he didn't even notice it.

The familiar voice belonged to Knight Leader.

"It seems control of Curtana Original was lost within London. It also seems it was artificially sent out of control using the safety device below Buckingham Palace. Were you involved in that? Well, either way, the knights' unity is about to collapse. Of course, that is mostly due to my own defeat, so I'm not exactly proud of it."

"I assume it was the doing of this country's magic specialists." William started rebuilding the sword from the dismantled parts. "And wouldn't the knights regain their unity if you were to rejoin the battle?"

"…"

"You're not sure you should," the mercenary said frankly. "In that case, just

watch what everyone does. I'm not sure how long you can wait, but it would definitely be better than rashly deciding your fate now."

"And what do you intend to do if I end up choosing to stand before you again?"

"That changes nothing. I will simply defeat you again."

"Tch. I can't stand up to that will of yours."

William could not see Knight Leader's expression, but he was likely smiling bitterly.

William finally finished checking over Ascalon.

"That Spell of Thororm that you use can target any one of the weapons that you are aware of and make it useless for 10 minutes. Could you not destroy Curtana Original by using that?"

"You fool. Everything has exceptions. And any knight that kept an ability sufficient to surely kill his head of state would be guilty of lèse majesté. To demonstrate my loyalty, I made sure the theory behind the spell was constructed so that it could not be used to kill someone in the Royal Family."

"…That doesn't sound like something I would hear from the person who attempted to decapitate the third princess with an executioner's axe."

"I did not use my own weapon on Lady Villian. For her, I was forced to use a 'normal tool'."

At some point, they had returned to their old lighter manner of speaking, but Knight Leader did not pay that fact any heed.

"I will give you one piece of advice before you head off to your death."

"And what is that?"

"At one point in our battle, you were worried that I held the ultimate strike. That I could combine Slicing Power, Weapon Weight, Enduring Solidity, Movement Speed, Attack Range, Special Use, and Precise Accuracy into a sure-fire attack that could not be evaded, blocked, or counterattacked. But in reality, I cannot use

all of those at once and can only use one pattern at a time."

Knight Leader stopped speaking for a second there.

Then, he seemed to have readied himself and continued.

"Second Princess Carissa can most likely pull off that strike using Curtana Original."

"…"

"If you truly intend to defeat her, prepare yourself. You must not underestimate her by thinking there is a trick behind her strength or that you can turn around the situation by finding a weakness in her."

"No matter who the enemy may be, what I must do does not change."

There was not even an instant of hesitation before William's response came.

That man did not speak except when necessary, so he did not even attempt to inspire himself with his own words.

"I will slice down the source of this disturbance. If taking Curtana from her, but not killing her will accomplish that, then that remains one of my options."

There was not the slightest disparity between what William Orwell must do and what Acqua of the Back must do. He was the same at that point when he had once attacked the Imagine Breaker boy. Even then, he had given the option of allowing the boy to go back to his normal life after destroying the boy's right arm that (he thought) was at the center of the disturbances. He thought that would stop the conflicts between science and magic across the world and that was enough.

"I do not know where or with whom I will take up my sword in the future, but until we meet again."

"Yes. Whatever the circumstances, I will go all out to-…Nnhhh!?"

The man of few words gave a rare meaningless grunt.

This made Knight Leader very nervous.

“What is it? An enemy attack!?”

“(…Not good. The third princess has sensed my presence and is coming this way! It seems a magical courier is helping her. She is definitely headed this way!!)”

As William whispered, he gathered up the tools used to disassemble his large sword and let Ascalon rest on his shoulder using the reinforced area near its base that was made for that purpose.

“(…And I just finished saying some slightly embarrassing things to her! I was hoping it would help stabilize her mind, but I’m not used to it and should probably have avoided doing it!!)”

“I don’t really understand, but you are saying some pretty embarrassing things.”

The mercenary ignored Knight Leader’s last comment and hurriedly left the area.

The various suppers had ended.

All that was left was to wait for the war that would decide England’s fate.

They were all headed to a true battle where the lives of both friend and enemy could not be guaranteed.

However, they all naturally gathered together.

Between the lines 4

Queen Elizard had finally made it to the outskirts of London, but the military horse was completely exhausted. But then, it had run nearly 50 kilometers across asphalt, so it had done quite well for a horse.

“I really am sorry about this. I’ve been doing nothing but troubling you this whole time. If I manage to get my political power back, I may even make you the first horse in the world to receive a military decoration,” she said anxiously.

The queen held a bucket full of water. She and the horse were on a plain, but it turned into a manmade pasture a little further on. She had stolen the water from a barn there.

The horse continued to point its head in the direction of London as if to say “What are you saying!? I can keep going. I can keep going for quite some time!!”, but it truly wouldn’t last much longer if it didn’t take a rest. The queen gripped the reins rather forcefully to force its head down to drink the water.

The horse was somewhat excited, but the water must have helped it realize how tired it was, because it then folded its legs up underneath itself to sit on the ground. It then started eating the short undergrowth that was growing next to the asphalt.

(…I really am causing trouble for everyone.)

The queen frowned as she thought not just of the horse, but of everyone fighting across the United Kingdom.

She looked down at Curtana Second.

(…I have a feeling this would go faster if I just fully opened up Curtana’s power and started running, but *I want to avoid doing that for a long period of time*.)

And then…

“F-fheee…. Riding a horse certainly does wear you out when you aren’t used to it.”

The person who had ruined the solemn mood with that comment was a blonde woman bending over and pressing on her back, Laura Stuart.

Elizard looked over at her with a look of scorn that was quite different from her previous expression.

“You sure are weak. And you wore out the horse’s stamina by not matching your movements to its rhythm.”

Perhaps in response to Elizard’s sharp tone, the horse stopped eating the grass and looked over at her. Its kind eyes seemed to be saying, “Now, now. Carrying people and things is my job.”

(Even this horse looks more capable right now.)

That was when Elizard heard a rustling noise.

Her sharp gaze rushed over and found a single figure.

“Oh, what a hungry horse. Do you want one of my carrots?” said a soft female voice.

The queen’s hand had been gripping Curtana Second despite it having lost most of its power, but she relaxed upon hearing that voice.

“Rimea?”

“Yes, it’s me, Mother.”

The monocled first princess smiled while holding an orange carrot in one hand.

Elizard looked at her own daughter with a puzzled look on her face.

“What are you doing here?”

“I was waiting for you, mother. From the knights’ transmissions I intercepted, I knew where you had disappeared, so I concluded this was the most likely route you would head through to get to London.”

“…What do you want? I know you and you aren’t just going to join forces with me so easily. In fact, given your thought patterns, you’re more likely to try to defeat me here so you can take Curtana Second and use it in some plan to defeat Carissa.”

“I did consider such a plan at one point, but fighting using Curtana Second now that it has lost most of its power would be too much of a bother. I would rather use my intellect in order to play a smarter role.”

“…So says my daughter with a meaningful smile on her face and rough-looking spiritual items rolling around at her feet. And I’m willing to bet that wire stretching from that thicket over there connects to a Claymore mine. Normal cars might drive through here, so remove it.”

In compliance with Elizard’s casual-sounding instruction, Rimea removed the wire stretching across the road horizontally, with her tongue sticking out slightly.

“There we go. By the way, is it true that horses love carrots?”

“They are herbivores, so they’ll probably eat them, but it isn’t like they love them more than anything else. They mainly eat grass.”

“Oh, so it’s similar to the fact that goats don’t actually eat paper. Sorry.”

Rimea started to pull back her hand holding the carrot, but the horse stretched out its neck and grabbed the orange vegetable as if to say, “Why? I’ll eat anything you’ll give me.”

“Good, good,” Rimea said with a smile as she petted the horse’s head.

Elizard looked on almost in shock.

“You really do show your true face around those who have no political power or interests, don’t you?”

“Of course, mother. I do not intend to give my trust to anyone that knows who I am. I want to trust those who treat me kindly despite not knowing I am a princess.”

“I will admit that is one important aspect of a leader, but…why are all of my daughters at such extremes? The oldest strategizes everything and does not trust people, the second gets so caught up in fighting that she gets everything around her wrapped up in it, and the third takes others into such high consideration that she barely has opinions of her own.”

Elizard scratched at her bangs.

A thin smile appeared on Rimea's lips.

"How unexpected. Are you really in a position where you can preach at us like that? Perhaps the problem lies in your principle of noninterference, combined with that incredibly harsh training you gave us? If you had wanted to, you could have at least given Villian a comfortable life."

"What are you saying? If I didn't let you develop your personalities on your own, it would have just invited you to be dependent on me. And that is especially true with Villian's benevolence. She could easily end up simply relying on others, so I can't just give her easy help like that. If you look at the long term, my methods are not wrong. Unlike you three, I am a sensible person."

"Oh, but who was it that used Curtana Second to teach the politicians a lesson after they tried to use Villian as bait to gain South America ten years ago?"

"D-don't bring that up. There are some actions that a parent must take."

"…No, that kind of thing isn't going to make her go soft," muttered Laura from the side.

"Oh, right. Speaking of being at an extreme, Carissa's methods this time are rather pointed."

"So you think Carissa is after expanding Curtana's effective area, too?"

"Yes," nodded Rimea. "Curtana Original is a spiritual item that applies the concept of Michael, the leader of the angels, to the head of state within the United Kingdom. But if Curtana's effects could be used outside the country, the Queen of England could become a disaster that overruns all of Europe. She would carry out divine punishment on targets of her own choosing and create more deaths on her own than a hydrogen bomb or the Black Death."

"That sword is like a conductor's baton that controls the massive spell put together geographically by the 4 cultures that make up the United Kingdom. The knights could use all their strength to protect the United Kingdom while Carissa single-handedly uses Curtana to demolish Europe. …That method could actually end up working. After all, it is possible that human magic would not be able to

harm her if she fully released Curtana Original’s power.”

If that happened, it would be almost impossible for anyone to rival Carissa unless a true angel or possibly a Magic God stepped forward.

“…But is that really all?”

“What?”

“I had a spy at the Edinburgh base of New Light, the group used and disposed of by Carissa. Heh heh. Perhaps it is a special privilege of intellectual types to say something clichéd as ‘I won’t tell you until I have proof.’”

Rimea had said she had a spy, but that did not refer to a magician that served the Royal Family or a military intelligence agent. She especially hated those types of pros and elites that held political power. The person in Edinburgh was likely someone she had formed a bond with without using her political power during one of her frequent trips outside of the palace as someone other than a princess.

(Her self reliance and independence gained under her own power is the best of the three sisters. If only it wasn’t rooted in mistrust. Not being able to open up can’t be fun.)

Elizard sighed.

When Rimea started to feed the horse another carrot, the queen looked at her suspiciously.

“Hey, where did you get that food?”

“Oh, you didn’t know? Just a bit ago, the remnants of the church had gathered around here to have a last supper. It seems they left the tools and cooking equipment not needed for fighting here. I assume they are planning on coming back for it if they win.”

“Wha-?”

“Don’t worry. I gave a taste of the different foods to my pet and none of it seems to have anything dangerous added in.”

The first princess gave three quick clicks of her tongue which was her signal for calling her small indoor dog.

However, there was no sign of a pet coming out at Rimea's signal.

"?"

The first princess looked around to find a calico cat and an indoor dog glaring at each other at close quarters outside of a small cage with a broken door. Their low growls seemed to be saying "Who the hell are you!?" and "This is my country!!"

"Oh, what a cute cat. I've been interested in Asian cats for a while, but they're so much cuter than I expected."

Rimea picked up the cat with a completely defenseless childlike smile and the indoor dog barked seeming to say "Hey! I'm the one that risked his life tasting that carrot!!"

However, that was not what caught Queen Elizard's interest.

"Dammit!! Something that delicious was going on not too long ago!? There had to have been things going on there on the level of pulling a picture of your lover from your pocket and saying you're going to marry her once the war is over!! Am I just fated to miss out on the best parts!?"

"It seems they all proudly headed off towards the center of London."

"And they left me behind!? D-damn. Let's go, horse! I have to get to London as soon as possible!!"

Seeming to say, "Sure thing. Now this is how a queen should be," the horse stood up.

Elizard easily mounted the military horse and grabbed Laura Stuart with one hand pulling her up onto the back of the horse.

"Hey. How's the preparation of the flag going?" she asked the Archbishop.

"It's probably about halfway done. It was mixed in with the normal displays in the British Museum, so not many people would have realized it was a spiritual

item. It should be usable if Charles Conder did what he was supposed to."

"A normal worker, hm? If the knights notice what he is doing, his life could be at risk… I have to show my respect to the gentlemen of this country."

After saying that, Elizard remained silent for a bit.

She thought within her heart.

She thought of the people who had prepared at that campground and headed for London. She also thought of the other people risking their lives to help who could not even use magic.

(…Hm. Carissa gaining the ability to use Curtana outside of the country and attacking Europe while becoming nigh invincible using the position of the leader of the angels is certainly a problem, but…)

The look on the queen's face changed.

Her expression turned grim as she stared in the direction of London.

(Have you forgotten that she already has that power here within the United Kingdom? You are heading off to fight someone more dreadful than a hydrogen bomb and who could easily destroy all of Europe single-handedly!!)

"Those fools! Even if the fate of England hangs in the balance, how can they head off to the final battle with no real trump card and with nothing at their disposal but their fighting spirit and their guts!? It's not my fault if they die!!"

"Heh heh. For what you're saying, you sound rather happy, mother."

Chapter 7: A Wonderful Enemy Who is Both a Princess and a Queen. *Curtana_Original.*

Part 1

3 AM.

Kamijou entered London along with some members of the Anglican Church.

However, this time they did not just travel straight through the city. To head to Buckingham Palace quickly, they split up and rode in over 20 large trucks.

Since they had entered London, they hadn’t come across any kind of inspection point, but that only made the situation seem even weirder to Kamijou. The knights were not even using the police or the military anymore. Itsuwa and the other Amakusas had been preparing spells to break through those inspection points, so they frowned.

“I suppose the lack of inspection points means they have gathered all their fighting force around Buckingham Palace,” said Kanzaki expressing her fears, but they stuck to their plan because they weren’t going to come up with a solution. They just had to hope they didn’t lose many people before making it to the main force.

As he sat in the open back of the truck, the cold autumn wind stung Kamijou’s cheek.

Due to the knights' control, there were no other people or vehicles moving along the large London road. This allowed the truck Kamijou was on to completely ignore the speed limit. People must have tried to run off in a hurry during the suppression of the city because abandoned cars remained in the middle of the road. The truck occasionally drove erratically to avoid them causing Kamijou's body to shake back and forth.

Kamijou glanced over at the faces of the Anglicans on the truck with him.

It seemed they did not especially care who held the political power. As long as the British people could live their normal lives, it didn't matter who controlled the country. However, any leader that created a new order that openly allowed the military to publicly slaughter people was not something the church was going to allow. That was why their determination to confront Carissa did not waver.

They were holding out a hand of salvation to a lost lamb.

In that way, the church's goal was quite clear.

"One last check," said Kanzaki from within the same truck. "Our goal is to reach Buckingham Palace as quickly as possible in order to stop the leader of this coup d'etat, Carissa. I propose that destroying Curtana Original is the quickest method to that end."

"…With the loss of Knight Leader and the second princess losing control of Curtana, the knights' confidence in her ability will be shaken, right?"

It wasn't quite coming into focus for Kamijou.

However, Third Princess Villian nodded while sitting elegantly nearby.

"Curtana Original is the symbol of their coup d'etat. If it is destroyed before their eyes, the knights' hearts will break as well. My sister receives her monstrous power from Curtana. Without the sword, she will return to being a normal person."

"Think of them like terrorists planning to change the country with a nuclear missile," said Kanzaki giving an extremely dangerous allegory. "If they lose the nuclear missile at the center of their plan, would any of them really try to

continue with that plan?”

“Well, I suppose not, but…” said Kamijou hesitantly.

Then Index spoke up from the side.

“The coup d’etat will end along with Curtana. But that is much easier said than done. Within the All-English Continent, the head of state who possesses Curtana Original can wield power as the leader of the angels, Michael, that is well above the human level.”

“It’s true that destroying that blade with a frontal attack may be difficult even with all of the remaining resistance forces gathered together.” There was a real weight to Kanzaki’s words because she was the person who had once fought the angel named Misha Kreutzev. “But if we’re going to be facing a non-standard enemy, we should rely on non-standard people.”

“I-I knew we were gonna end up here.” Kamijou winced as she looked over at him. “It may be true that my right hand can completely destroy any object that uses magic like Curtana, but, Kanzaki, Carissa might be stronger than both you and Acqua right now. If she’s zipping around that fast, I won’t be able to touch her.”

“Yes, we know that. Normally, I would not ask a normal high school student to take part in a fight against someone above Saint level.” Kanzaki nodded. “We will use you as a highly powerful but slow moving mobile cannon. If Carissa attacks by playing around with us using her speed, the Amakusas and myself will use our speed to somehow force her in your direction.”

The remaining Anglican forces included the Amakusas, the former Agnese Forces, and independent magicians such as Sherry. However, when it came to a matter of speed, the Amakusas who were focused around a Saint would be their best bet.

The battle would be decided by how successful the cooperation was between the Amakusas with their specialty in speed and the other members who would either be firing long distance attacks or using support magic.

“You do not need to think too hard about this,” said Kanzaki to Kamijou who had fallen silent. “Please just survive to the end. This is the greatest role you

have ever been given.”

It was a role he shared with all the others.

If they lacked any one of them, it would all be over.

Kamijou Touma lowered his gaze to his own right hand as he asked a question.

“…But will this really be okay? We’re traveling with over 500 people here. It worries me that we haven’t seen a single sign of the knights yet. If Carissa notices us…”

“Oh, I’m sure she has noticed us. A large scale battle is going to begin before we make it to Buckingham Palace,” smoothly responded Kanzaki.

Kamijou’s expression turned to one of shock as she continued.

“But even if she has detected us, it won’t be a problem as long as she cannot carry out a concrete counterattack.”

“?”

Kamijou frowned and Kanzaki for some reason made a gesture as if she were sticking her index finger in one of her ears.

“It is about to begin. It would be best if you plugged your ears.”

Part 2

The Sky Fortress Coven Compass had moved to a point in the Atlantic Ocean a bit northwest of Islay so that it was just outside the national boundaries of the United Kingdom.

By leaving the country, the fierce attacks by the knights being powered by Curtana and the All-English Continent had temporarily stopped.

Smoke was rising from various points on the giant disk-shaped fortress and the spiritual item in command of attitude control had been damaged, causing the entire fortress to tilt. Even so, Coven Compass still managed to ignore the laws of physics and float through the air. Its main engine was still functioning.

The black late-night sea had what looked like an island made of steel floating in it.

It was a sea fortress prepared by the knights, but it was half sunk because, unlike Coven Compass, its sailing ability had been destroyed. Essentially, the Anglican witches had gotten in a good return blow.

The witches protected Coven Compass as smoke rose from it and glared at the knights who were attempting to bring it down.

A few of the knights had left the national boundary and returned to their normal power. The witches took them out from their brooms. Looking down at the dark ocean surface, a number of losers could be seen waiting for rescue with their strobe light-like emergency signals flashing.

Outside the national boundary, the witches were stronger. Within, the knights were stronger.

The two forces fought while being separated by an invisible line that had been drawn on a map by humans.

One of the witches, Smartvery, kept an eye on a long distance spell that was intermittently firing as she focused on her communications spiritual item.

She could hear the voice of the operator through it.

“…Beginning preparations for a large-scale flash bombardment in the direction of Buckingham palace. The witches in certain areas should avoid the attack and pay close attention to make sure they do not lose control of their brooms due to the violent currents of air created by the preparation and firing of the large scale spell.”

Upon hearing the businesslike voice, Smartvery whistled.

“That’s a straight shot of over 500 kilometers… That’s 1.5 times the supposed maximum range. And this is a direct attack, so the magic power can’t be guided at relay points.” Smartvery’s voice sounded carefree. “And to top it all off, it has to pass by the ruins on the Isle of Man which could provide some interference. Well, I’m sure those hardheaded people are well aware of all that.”

A fellow witch spoke up over a different communications line.

“Personally, I can’t believe we got permission to fire on Buckingham Palace.”

“It seems the third princess used her position as a member of the Royal Family to push right through all the pain-in-the-ass formalities. It’s times like this when you can only be thankful for these incredibly influential people.”

“…Well, you could also describe the second princess that started this whole coup d’etat in the first place an ‘incredibly influential person’.”

“I suppose they are quite similar in that regard, but they’ve shifted in completely opposite directions.”

At that point, the witches’ conversation was cut off.

Static-like noise came over the connection and Smartvery’s broom shook. She frantically brought it back under control and she heard her companion’s surprised voice over the spiritual item.

“Kssh…Is it starting…!?”

A light brighter than anything found in the natural world wiped away the darkness over the Atlantic Ocean.

A pure white sphere appeared at a point about 20 meters above the center of the top side of the disk-shaped sky fortress. The powerful energy that had been created by the large scale temple caused the air in the area to expand. This created a change in the air pressure which brought forth violent storm-like winds. Coven Compass was activating its other trump card.

The bottom side functioned as an aircraft carrier for the witches and the top side

was a cannon.

The large-scale flash cannon took up half of the giant fortress's power and it was being aimed at the capital of the United Kingdom.

"Kssh…Do you think…the knights will…Ksshhh…try to interfere…with the firing…?"

"They might try to a bit, but I wonder if any idiotic heroes will appear who try to throw themselves in the way of the blast? If they had the courage to do that, I would have thought they would have just crossed the national boundary and attacked together."

When Knight Leader had still been with them, they may have done so.

When Elizard ruled over them, some would have been glad to do so.

(…It seems this is the limitations of violence, new Queen Carissa.)

As she watched the non-moving knights, Smartvery gave a slightly scornful smile.

She heard the voice of the operator in her ear.

"…Commencing fire. We will destroy Buckingham Palace!!"

Part 3

A loud explosive noise shattered all the windows of the nearby buildings.

A pillar of light with a diameter of over 5 meters shot through the London night sky directly above the quickly moving truck.

Even though he was plugging both his ears, the shockwave seemed to completely flip over his sense of balance and it shook him to the depths of his brain. The giant truck slid sideways unnaturally either because the explosion had surprised Itsuwa as she drove it or because the truck itself had been physically shaken.

The attack did not end with that one blast.

A second and a third blast were fired in the direction of Buckingham Palace with an interval of a few seconds between them.

Despite her being right in front of him, Kamijou yelled in Kanzaki's direction so as not to lose to the explosive noise.

"When you said her detecting us wouldn't be a problem if she couldn't counterattack, is this what you were talking about!?"

"Yes. If Carissa's side is busy defending against these blasts, we have a chance to reach the battlefield. Support from a long distance bombardment is one of the basics of a land battle," said Kanzaki with a calm expression despite the explosive noise.

Then a blast attacked Buckingham Palace from a different angle. The blast was more like a thin and sharp piece of pitch black darkness slicing through the night sky. However, there were a lot of them. A barrage of somewhere from 100 to 200 of them arced through the sky and into the palace area.

"Is there more than one fortress!?"

"That was from Selkie Aquarium at the bottom of the ocean near Dover. From what I heard, of the one's still functioning after the knights' fierce attacks, only Selkie 1, 2, 4, and 5 were available for this attack because it seems 3 and 8 are tied up battling the knights and the Royal Navy."

It seemed Selkie Aquarium was a submarine-type mother ship for the magicians that carried out underwater activities as if they were mermaids or something. It was usually kept waiting there so it could quickly respond if any definite movements were made on the border between England and France, but it was currently helping with the bombardment.

(Well, I’m glad they’re helping us with this huge attack, but…)

“…If we enter Buckingham Palace while this is going on, won’t we be killed?”

“You need to bear in mind that even a large scale bombardment like this is not enough to defeat Carissa. That is just how formidable the enemy we are about to clash swords with is.”

“Fucking monsters,” Kamijou spat out without thinking.

He knew it was quite reckless for an amateur like him to head into a battlefield with just a fist against someone who could withstand concentrated fire from attacks that were similar to a battleship’s main guns.

“But if you fire like crazy like this, won’t you damage the surrounding areas?”

“The area around Buckingham Palace is a giant park, so stray shots shouldn’t be an issue,” responded Index using the information she recalled using her perfect memory.

Kanzaki showed her agreement with Index’s opinion and then continued speaking.

“Also, Carissa and the knights likely led the population to specific places that make them easier to control. The people will have been gathered in hotels, theaters, movie theaters, churches, and other places around the city. Even if a house is accidentally destroyed, it is unlikely anyone will be inside. …However, we still need to be careful,” she said as she seemed to be imagining such an unexpected tragedy.

However, it seemed there was a good chance Buckingham Palace would be destroyed. Kamijou didn’t know how much the building itself and the art within were worth, but he was pretty sure there were mountains of national treasures inside.

Thinking about that, he glanced over at Third Princess Villian.

“…I do not mind,” she said in a steady voice. “With all the people around the country sharing the pain, we of the Royal Family cannot be so selfish as to hope to make it out unscathed. …If it will end the disturbance that has overcome this

country, I say we blow that palace to smithereens.”

(…?)

To Kamijou, something seemed off between Villian’s words and her expression.

He had only just met her, so he couldn’t be sure, but he had a feeling something about her had changed since he had seen her cowering timidly in Buckingham Palace.

“I have realized something,” said Villian as she accepted the boy’s gaze and checked various parts of the bowgun in her hands.

The bowgun was not an unrefined one made of metal. Instead, it seemed to be custom made for the Royal Family and was made of the polished amber-colored wood that was used in bar counters. The scope attached to it seemed like an antique and Kamijou would have believed it if someone had told him it had been used by da Vinci.

“Those servants and cooks who cannot use magic stood to fight despite their fear just so I could escape. And that mercenary fought a group of knights to protect me.”

The bowgun was over a meter long and it looked like it would be difficult to pull back the string with her slender feminine arms. However, a slide similar to that on a pump-action shotgun was installed on the bottom of the bowgun possibly for that very reason. Gears and pulleys were probably used to make the string easy to pull.

“If I can protect them by fleeing, I am willing to hide anywhere. However, if their plight will not change if I do that, then I have no choice left but to fight.”

Over her green dress, Villian was wearing the kind of quiver belts ancient hunters had worn and she returned Kamijou’s gaze with a strong but reserved gaze of her own.

“What about you? You have no duty to risk your life for England and you have managed to rescue your friend who got wrapped up in all this. No one would blame you if you escaped to a safe area with her, so why are you still heading to possible death?”

“…I don’t have any major reason,” Kamijou said while looking up at the pure white flashes cutting through the night sky above. “If I can avoid it, I’d rather not go anywhere dangerous. If it’s something I can just abandon, I’d go ahead and abandon it. If everyone wrapped up in this coup d’etat were the enemy characters in a shooting game that existed solely to be shot, then I’d have already abandoned all this and been trying to find a way back to Academy City.”

Unlike Villian, he had nothing he needed to prepare.

His preparations would be complete the instant he clenched his right fist.

“But they aren’t.” Villian might not have been able to hear Kamijou’s words due to the continuing explosions, but he continued regardless. “That kind of convenient person doesn’t exist. Everyone carries something important enough to die for and they are running around so as not to lose it. So how am I supposed to abandon this? This isn’t an issue of duty or important-sounding reasons. If you want to stand up and fight, I say you should stand up and fight.”

Villian stared at Kamijou for a bit.

Finally, she spoke.

“No matter the principles or thoughts you have within yourself, you listen to the voices of everyone at each place you go and do everything you can to go with the best option for that situation…”

“?”

“You are…yet a different kind of mercenary from William.”

Kamijou was about to ask “William?”, but something happened before he could.

The sound of the air being repeatedly sliced resounded above their heads.

(A helicopter…!?)

However, Kamijou’s initial thought was wrong.

It was white.

A large object without color like an unfinished plastic model was there. The large fan-shaped object was floating by rotating at high speed.

It had a radius of 50 meters and the angle of the fan was about 90 degrees.

Kamijou recognized the color of the ridiculously huge construction.

“That’s the wreckage created when Curtana Original slices through all dimensions…!!”

Immediately after his yell, the giant rotating fan that had been maintaining its horizontal position suddenly tilted down diagonally. The spiraling object immediately lost its ability to float and fell much like a crashing helicopter.

Its fall seemed to be aimed directly at the truck Kamijou and the others were on.

It was like a giant rotating blade that could cut straight through lumber.

“Dammit. Is this why there were no inspection points!?”

“…Ksshh…Hold on everyone…!!” said Itsuwa’s voice from the radio stuck on the back of the truck.

Immediately afterwards, the large truck changed lanes in a reckless manner that swung the back wildly all in order to avoid the giant 100 diameter rotating blade attacking from the sky. The rotating blade sank 20 meters into the ground digging up and scattering not just the asphalt but the constructions for the subway station under the ground as well.

They had just barely managed to avoid a direct hit.

However, a shock hit the large truck from the side.

The impact with the ground had altered the trajectory of the giant rotating blade causing it to hit the side of a building, hop up from the ground, and unsteadily writhe around. This random changing of the rotating blade’s axis had caused one corner to strike the side of the truck.

It was side blow.

With that one strike, the 10-ton truck was knocked from the road, over the sidewalk, and into the side of a building.

“Gwaaaahhh!?”

The severe shock running across his body caused Kamijou to yell out.

He hadn’t been thrown from the back of the truck, but the truck itself had been bent almost into a V-shape. The truck simply wasn’t going to run anymore.

That was when more bad news came.

Kamijou heard that helicopter rotor-like noise again.

And this time it wasn’t just one.

His body stiffened and he fearfully looked up to see 4 or 5 of those spinning fan-shaped blades that exceeded 100 meters flying through the air like frisbees.

“Oh, fuck!! Run!!”

Kamijou’s yell had been rather pointless because the various Anglican members on the back of the truck had already jumped down to the broken road and were running as far away as they could. Kamijou forced his hurting body along, grabbed Index’s hand as she hadn’t left yet, and jumped down from the truck.

That was when the closely flying rotating blades struck. The rotating blades had looked like they were trying to repel each other in midair which made them fall to the ground in random but hard to avoid trajectories.

(…!!!???)

He hadn’t been able to let out a yell that time.

The multiple blades tore into the asphalt and mercilessly destroyed building walls. Just when Kamijou realized Index’s hand had slipped from his grip, his body was thrown into the air. He had managed to avoid being directly hit, but his body had been lifted up along with the torn up asphalt.

He didn’t even have time to brace for the impact.

When he struck the hard ground, Kamijou thought his breathing was going to stop.

(Agh!? Shit…)

“Index…? Kanzaki…Itsuwa!! Dammit, where is everyone!?”

The shock of the impact had blown dust up into the air preventing Kamijou from seeing anything. He coughed as he attempted to call his comrades’ names.

Only the explosive noises returned his calls.

Those noises belonged to the rotating blades floating through the night sky at a set speed and to the giant beams of light attacking from afar.

In that hopeless situation, Kamijou heard a frail voice.

The voice was familiar.

“Over…here.”

“Itsuwa!?”

“Y-yes.”

Kamijou tried to run over, but he came to a dead end. No, more accurately, he came to the entrance to a back alley that was blocked by a crumbled building wall. Itsuwa’s voice was coming from the gaps in the wreckage.

“Can you go after Lady Villian? Just after we all split up, I saw her heading off towards Buckingham Palace on her own.”

“!?”

Kamijou looked around, but he saw no sign of Villian. Had she really gone on ahead on her own?

(Dammit!!)

Kamijou looked in the direction of Buckingham Palace, but he then looked back towards Itsuwa seeming to have realized something. Itsuwa was on the other

side of the wall, so she must have heard some small noise or simply noticed the gap between his words.

“Ah ha ha. Don’t worry. I’m not buried alive or anything. We’ll be heading along the alleyways on a different route to Buckingham Palace. It looks like it would be difficult to meet up with you right away, so let’s regroup at the palace.”

“But…are you all right? Are you really all right!?”

“Everyone split up and is taking their own route to the palace. …Anyway, you need to get going. Staying in one place will just get you hit.”

Kamijou then heard the sound of someone running off into the distance on the other side of the rubble. It seemed Itsuwa really was heading for Buckingham Palace by heading along the alleyway.

(Where’s everyone else…!?)

Kamijou looked around the area.

He saw a few figures running ahead along the main road. He saw someone, Kanzaki, jumping from rooftop to rooftop. She was holding Index and yelled something at him, but he couldn’t hear what it was.

Just seeing that familiar face was enough to relieve Kamijou momentarily, but then something else made him stiffen again. A nearby broken piece of concrete must have at least scraped against Villian because it had a scrap of green cloth caught on it. The piece of cloth had been torn off violently and it seemed to be an ominous metaphor. Kamijou frantically shook his head to rid himself of the baseless presentiment.

According to Itsuwa, Villian had gone on ahead alone.

He had no choice but to run to Buckingham Palace.

He was pretty sure it was only 2 kilometers away.

However, those 2000 meters had become a hellish path of hardships.

He heard a loud dull noise.

He looked up and saw a sphere with a diameter of over 20 meters falling. The sphere was a blank colorless white. It landed about 100 meters ahead of him as if to block his path and sank an unnatural amount into the ground. It had probably sunk far enough down to crush the subway line down below.

However, the sphere still floated back up as if it had bounced.

It crushed a vehicle that had been abandoned on the road which exploded, struck the side of a building, and rolled in the opposite direction. Its random movements seemed almost like the movements of a living being as it headed in Kamijou's direction.

"Shit!!"

Kamijou immediately pressed himself up against the wall of one of the buildings along the sidewalk.

The giant 20 meter sphere plowed that way on a straight course that would smash Kamijou onto the ground like a roller.

However, Kamijou avoided an instant death.

When a sphere was put inside a square box that's sides were the same length as the sphere's diameter, gaps would exist in the corners. By pressing up against the building, Kamijou had entered one of those gaps.

However, the destruction did not end there.

The giant sphere sank into the wall above Kamijou's head causing it to collapse. Kamijou ran forward as quickly as he could to avoid being caught in the large amount of collapsing rubble. He heard what sounded like a tremor of the earth and dust chased after him as if it were trying to attack his back.

He had no time to rest.

More fan-like rotating blades attacked.

Perhaps due to their center of gravity, giant pillars seemed to stand unnaturally after falling over destroying the road.

A great number of buildings were destroyed which blocked Kamijou's path.

(Each individual construction isn't all that complex…)

As he ran recklessly forward, Kamijou gritted his teeth.

(But their size is just too much! These things really are like a bombardment from a battleship!!)

Even after going all out and avoiding one or two of them, he could not relax. As long as the "bombardment" continued, Kamijou and the others that had split up would continue to be in danger.

It was possible the lack of knights within London and the confinement of the people elsewhere had been in preparation for this kind of attack.

Kamijou cut through a gap between piles of rubble, ran through a curtain of dust, jumped over a crack through which he could see the collapsed subway tunnel, and simply ran across London.

Itsuwa had said Villian had gone on ahead, but he didn't see anyone no matter how far he ran. He started to wonder if she had really made it through that harsh battlefield.

Finally, the Buckingham Palace grounds came into view.

Perhaps due to the magic bombardments from Coven Compass and Selkie Aquarium, the large fence around the park had been twisted apart and partially blown away and the short green lawn looked as if it had been torn up by a giant missing a shot with a giant golf club because the black soil had been torn up creating a crater.

Cutting between a gap in the remains of the destroyed fence, Kamijou unhesitatingly headed into the palace grounds.

As soon as he did, a chill ran down his spine.

For no reason, his legs seemed like they would stop moving.

It was past 3 in the morning, but the palace showed up brightly in the darkness

due to the decorative lights washing over it. Due to the bombardment from afar, about a third of the right side of the palace had turned to rubble leaving the luxurious interior visible from where Kamijou was. The almost unreal splendor of the building prevented the scene from appearing too tragic. It looked like a giant dollhouse with its roof and wall removed.

Yet, for Kamijou Touma, the half-destroyed palace was not the pivotal point of the scene.

He was looking at the garden at the front of the palace.

A great number of mysterious large white objects had been created as a side effect of Curtana Original slicing through every dimension. Due to those objects slicing into the ground and falling over, the lawn and asphalt had been torn to pieces.

Two women stood amid all of it.

One was Third Princess Villian.

She looked like a princess from a picture book with her blonde hair, white skin, and green dress with a spread out skirt. She held a rather large bowgun in her hands, but a shotgun-like slide had been attached to the bottom so that even that delicate woman could pull back the string.

The other was Second Princess Carissa.

She wore a red dress with leather covering it in various places. In her hand, she held a sword with no tip or blade. Perhaps due to the method she used to defend against the bombardment, she had black soil and mud covering her cheeks. However, it did not look shameful in the slightest. The mud mixed in with her own sweat added to her dreadfulness.

“…”

“…”

The two of them were arguing over something. Or more accurately, Villian was snapping at Carissa, while Carissa lightly deflected her words.

Villian held the bowgun in her hands, but she had not pulled back the string yet and she wasn't even holding it up at the ready. She held it like someone holding a trophy at an award ceremony instead of as a weapon she intended to use.

On the other hand, Carissa held her sword so that it hung down loosely, but there was no trembling in her hand. Her muscles were prepared and it looked as if she could jump forward to attack that very instant.

Perhaps their physical stances represented their ideological stances.

At any rate, Villian was pushing the conversation forward and neglecting her weapon while Carissa was roughly going on with the conversation while focusing everything on her weapon.

It was clear what would happen.

Kamijou couldn't tell what they were talking about from where he was, but he didn't have time to find out.

(That idiot…!!)

Kamijou ran as fast as he could and jumped towards Villian's back to cover her.

Immediately afterwards, Carissa moved Curtana Original unhesitatingly.

With a tremendous noise, every dimension in the space Villian had just been was severed.

A white belt-like object that was over 100 meters long was created. A few seconds later, that three dimensional object that was the cross section of the severed dimensions that could manifest in the three dimensional world fell to the ground with a thud.

Villian looked completely surprised at the sudden occurrence while Kamijou stood up from lying on top of her and glared at their powerful enemy.

She was the second princess of England.

She was the leader of the coup d'etat and the one who held the most talent in military matters of the three sisters.

And by using Curtana Original and the All-English Continent, she wielded the power of the leader of the angels.

“Carissa!!”

Carissa responded to Kamijou’s yell with a calm expression.

“Congratulations. That was a commendably nice play. That’s the kind of example my weak minded knights need to see. I really can’t take my sister’s benevolence lightly. It continues to manifest itself in unexpected ways.”

The countless lights that were intended to illuminate the exterior of the luxurious palace were bathing the second princess in light. She stood within that light as if it were made for her.

Kamijou Touma could not remove his eyes from her.

That was not due to her beauty. It was due to the fact that he didn’t know what would happen if he lowered his guard even slightly.

Even an amateur like him could sense that.

“By the way, where are the others? Are the rest of your troops buried under rubble?”

“!!”

Kamijou’s expression stiffened, but he shook that terrible image from his mind.

They were fine. They would surely be there soon. He had no choice but to act with that thought in mind. Turning Carissa’s attention his way would bring an end to her “bombardment” and make their journey less dangerous.

However, as if to wipe that optimistic hope from Kamijou’s mind, a villainous smile spread across Carissa’s face as she rested Curtana Original on her shoulder.

“If so, the church will have betrayed my expectations as well. I’ll end up looking like an idiot for having made so many preparations.”

“Preparations…?” Villian muttered as if a very bad feeling had gushed up within her chest and leaked out of her mouth.

Immediately afterwards, an incredibly huge object passed by over their heads.

The object had a similar form to a hang glider.

However, it was huge. It was almost 80 meters across making the giant object around the same size as the large passenger plane Sky Bus 365. After passing over their heads once, it flew in a giant arc turning its nose back towards them.

“Don’t look so shocked. Did you think Coven Compass and Selkie Aquarium were the only types of mobile fortresses? Surely you knew that we control most of the major facilities within the United Kingdom. We have an almost limitless number of spiritual items at our disposal. And especially the ones the knights directly use for battle. I doubt you’re going to be bored.”

Carissa started laughing, but a few more roars and explosions cut through the air drowning her out. Almost 20 of those 80 meter hang glider-like “fortresses” circled around in the air above Buckingham Palace. The silver metal parts reinforcing them at important points looked like armor.

The second princess spoke while looking up at the fortresses that were dyed the same red as her dress.

“Allow me to introduce you to the mobile siege fortresses known as Griffin Sky.”

Having no idea what kind of attacks they could send his way, Kamijou looked up in shock at the mobile fortresses with only Carissa’s voice getting through to him.

“They are used to attack strongholds on the surface, so they cannot fly as high as the Sky Bus 365 and they are not as flexible or practical as Coven Compass because they are unmanned spiritual items, but they are the country’s best at linked attacks. They are stupid but obedient which makes them the perfect military tools.”

(These are all like that…?)

Kamijou stared speechless up at that scene that exceeded the scale of a personal battle.

(There are 20 mobile fortresses like Coven Compass here…!?)

His gaze moved from the night sky back to the scene directly in front of him.

On top of those fortresses, Carissa had overwhelming power with Curtana Original and a force of knights had to be waiting somewhere.

Even if he did manage to destroy the sword with his right fist, would he and Villian really be able to fight in that situation?

Kamijou recalled the spiritual item known as Robin Hood that had been used to snipe the New Light magician Lessar. He looked towards the surrounding darkness and raised his guard even further.

However, Carissa said something he did not expect.

“There are no hidden troops. I just gave a bit of a live broadcast.”

“…?”

“With Knight Leader’s defeat and Curtana Original being sent out of control, the knights have started to doubt whether I am fit to be the head of state. You all may have been saved due to coincidence after coincidence, but I will admit that you used some excellent psychological warfare.”

Carissa had been spinning Curtana Original around, but she now brought it back to rest on her shoulder.

“As such, it was necessary that I brought the knights’ battle spirit back together. Although, I ended up using a rather crude method.”

A live broadcast. A crude method.

Kamijou had a bad feeling about what that meant and looked over. The sword with no blade or tip that was Curtana Original had a few drops of a dark red liquid on it.

“You don’t mean you…”

“Oh, I just gave a bit of a punishment. It led to the level of security around Buckingham Palace falling, but that’s still better than having the knights as a whole fall and consequently losing control of the country. Also, as the head of state I can use the power of the leader of the angels. I really don’t need any guards.”

“Did you kill them!? Those were your comrades!!” Kamijou yelled still in a state of utter shock.

Perhaps because she was picturing the event, Villian’s shoulders started to tremble.

“Don’t worry about that. If I simply killed them, it would leave too much to the imagination. In order to give the best performance with the least expenditure, I had to make things a little more fun.”

A fate worse than death.

He could not properly imagine the meaning behind those words, so Kamijou just gritted his teeth.

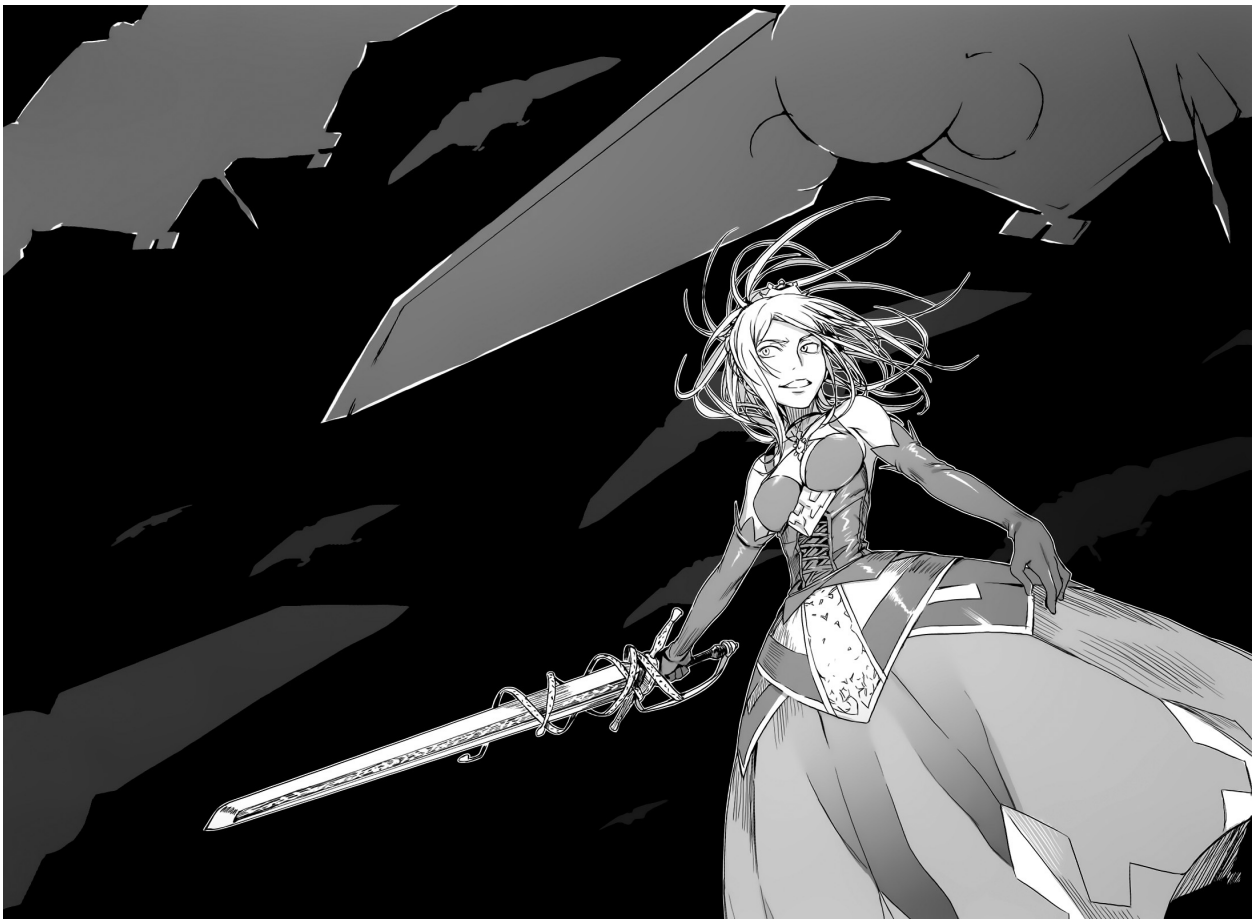
“The knights followed you this far because they trusted you in their own way. What’s wrong with your brain for you to view the loss of the comrades that fought alongside you like that as an ‘expenditure’!?”

A strained sound could be heard.

It was the sound of Kamijou Touma tightly clenching his right hand without him even knowing.

“Tell me,” responded Carissa without a single change to her expression. “Why do you think they are given such a high position and paid so much out of the taxes we collect? It is because they work themselves to the bone during national emergencies in order to rescue the country from its crises. That is the desire of any knight.”

“Why you…”



“They carried that duty out. They prevented the cowards who were prepared to flee from betraying me.”

Carissa slowly raised Curtana Original up from her shoulder.

She then spoke in a tone that sounded like she was speaking to a difficult child.

“However, they are really nothing more than a collection of chickens who refuse to head to their possible deaths. I just had to smooth things over a bit and create another situation where they can be certain that the coup d’etat will succeed!!” proclaimed Second Princess Carissa with a legendary sword in hand and the numerous giant fortresses flying through the ether and the half-destroyed palace to her back.

That signaled the beginning of the battle.

Part 4

If they could defeat Second Princess Carissa, the coup d'etat would be over.

Kamijou Touma was once again convinced of that.

With Knight Leader gone, the knights were unsure whether they should continue with the coup d'etat or end it. The main thing keeping them on the side of the coup d'etat was Carissa's "punishment". That meant that it would all fall apart if Carissa lost her power and thus lost her hold over them.

Compared to defeating each and every group of knights across the United Kingdom, simply defeating the overall boss seemed much easier.

Kamijou forced himself to think along that positive line of thinking in an attempt to lessen his body's tension.

"You will die."

When he heard that voice directly behind him, the sound of the wind being sliced accompanied it.

She hadn't just circled around behind him in that instant.

Curtana Original was already moving horizontally for Kamijou's neck.

"…!?"

He didn't have time to turn around. Kamijou dropped his waist down and just barely managed to avoid the strike. Or at least he thought he had. He felt a hot pain near his ear. Seeing what happened, Villian let out a short scream.

Then Kamijou heard an odd noise.

Following the trajectory of the horizontally swung sword, an unnaturally blank object appeared. It was the wreckage created as a side effect of severing dimensions. It naturally started to fall straight down towards Kamijou with a

weight greater than a mass of steel the same size.

(Shit…!!)

Kamijou rolled out of the way of the falling object. An unpleasant vibration reached Kamijou's gut.

"Too slow, pig. That's just going to get you sliced to pieces."

With a roar, she swung Curtana Original.

The vertical swing from top to bottom created a giant dimensional slicing attack stretching in a straight line 20 meters from Curtana.

It was a route that would separate the top half of Kamijou's body from the bottom half.

"!?"

He immediately held out his right hand.

With what sounded like a whip, the created slicing attack disappeared partway.

(It…disappeared?)

Kamijou jumped back up to his feet and ran towards Carissa.

If he could get just one hit in with his clenched fist, Curtana Original would be destroyed.

However, the second princess swung the sword before he could.

With the end of the sword pointing up, she moved it from right to left in a similar motion to opening a window. A shutter-like white wall of wreckage was created stopping Kamijou's fist.

A dull pain ran across his fist as if he had punched a steel wall.

He frowned as his hand throbbed slightly.

(It didn't work this time!? Dammit, I can't figure out what the conditions for

negating it are!!)

A chill ran down his spine. After all, his opponent attacked with a strike that could slice through all dimensions that could be represented with whole numbers. If he misread the situation, he wouldn't just lose his right arm. His entire body would be sliced in two.

However, he didn't have time to worry too much about that.

He didn't have time to slowly put together a strategy.

"Heh," breathed Carissa.

At the same time, an explosive sound resounded.

The white wall separating the two of them had been kicked straight up into the air by the second princess.

Carissa did not lower her leg.

Her second kick mercilessly struck Kamijou's gut. The attack was more like a machine gun than human martial arts.

With a thunderous noise, Kamijou's body easily flew a few meters before hitting the ground and bouncing a few times.

"Gh…bhaaaaahhh!!!???"

He couldn't suppress the urge to vomit and a surprisingly red mass came out.

While Kamijou writhed on the ground, Carissa smiled while spinning her sword around like a baton causing thin pieces of dimensional wreckage to fall to the ground. Villian finally started bringing her bowgun up, but the situation was changing so quickly she didn't seem able to aim properly.

(Gh…Dammit…Cough…I just can't keep up with her speed…!!)

Kamijou could tell he had completely lost strength from the very core of his body, but he still tried to stand up. He didn't notice, but his fingertips were trembling unnaturally.

“Oh, come on. What’s wrong? And I was going easy on you.”

Carissa’s expression did not change.

It was as if she were saying that he could not change the situation if he couldn’t even stand up.

“It seems there are side effects to carelessly putting a large amount of Telesma in your body. I’ll have to eventually put together a spell to remove that restraint.”

(She’s going easy on me…?)

Kamijou looked over at her as if he couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

Seeing that, Carissa swung Curtana Original over to point in a certain direction with its tip-less end.

“It’s dangerous to just sit there, you know?”

In that instant, Kamijou did not realize what it was that was approaching him.

It was one of the Griffin Skies flying above. There was no change in the red 80 meter wide hang glider itself, but there was a change in the giant shadow created by the moonlight. Its form changed as if it were rotating. It took on the form and weight of a knights’ lance, turned deep red, and floated just off the ground.

It seemed the fortress in the sky and the red lance on the ground were moving in unison.

In that state, the Griffin Sky flew across the sky above Buckingham Palace.

Of course, the linked 20 meter lance cut across just above the ground with tremendous speed.

And what did this do?

Kamijou Touma received a direct blow, doubled over, and flew into the air.

“Dbh….!?”

The pain assaulting his upper body was so great that his sense of pain failed and

he merely went numb. The boy flew over 15 meters before landing and rolling along the ground.

Afterwards, the numbness left and the pain returned.

“Ghaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

Kamijou writhed around on the ground from the intense pain, but he saw a different lance approaching from a different direction causing him to frantically roll out of the way. He was gritting his teeth, but a red liquid still flowed from his mouth.

However, Carissa looked dissatisfied despite being the one causing all the damage.

“Tch. I guess that’s the spiritual item’s automatic decision making. Those things are meant to destroy a fortress wall, so that strike should have torn your body in two. I guess the unmanned spiritual item’s decision to use the least amount of force necessary to destroy something based on its automatic calculations can backfire.”

After saying that, a sadistic grin spread across her face.

“Heh heh…Ha ha ha!! But you won’t be saved by anymore ridiculous glitches! I’ll manually set all of them to anti-Windsor Castle levels. That way I’ll have offensive spiritual items that will blow a human body to smithereens with just a light touch!!”

An intense chill ran down Kamijou’s back at Carissa’s words.

She had been going easy on him.

Now that the sky fortresses’ limiters had been released, his body would be turned to mincemeat if he received the same attack again.

(Dammit. Even with just Carissa, I can’t find a way to defeat her!)

Kamijou coughed up more blood, clenched his fist, and glared at her.

(Not to mention, that 20 of those fortress destroying spiritual items are flying

around up there. How am I supposed to find a way to win this!?)

That was when an intense pillar of light from the distant Coven Compass flew towards Carissa. Only one strike flew through the air, but that one strike held enough destructive power to shatter every window in London.

However, Carissa did not even bother looking at it.

She merely held her arm out to the side and spun Curtana Original around once like a baton.

Every dimension was severed along the path of the sword. It created a disk with a radius of about 20 meters. The dimensional wreckage in the form of a cross section bored deep into the ground creating a giant disk-shaped shield.

The large-scale flash spell struck it.

A loud explosion rang out, but the shield was not destroyed. The pillar of light scattered in all directions as it was not able to continue on its original path. Large trees within the garden were torn from the ground, streetlights were twisted, and the asphalt was torn up. The multiple Griffin Skies temporarily raised their altitude to avoid the effects of the blast.

That was all.

Second Princess Carissa herself was completely unharmed.

(Seriously…?)

Kamijou stared on in shock.

(Even with a bombardment like that, you can’t even scratch her. Is the head of state holding Curtana really that much of a monster…?)

“Does this really shock you that much?” Carissa said cutting off his thoughts.

With a snap of her wrist, she spun Curtana Original around again.

“What human can kill the leader of the angels?”

The second princess thrust the end of Curtana Original into the disk-shaped

shield.

Perhaps it was the result of slicing the dimensions located at the wreckage created from dimensions being sliced, but the sword sunk into the shield like a fork stabbed into a giant potato. Carissa then swung Curtana Original horizontally.

The giant disk-shaped shield with a radius of 20 meters moved with the sword.

“Oh, shit…!”

Kamijou instinctively held his hands up to protect his face, but it was a meaningless action.

Carissa was almost forcing Curtana Original along because the disk-shaped shield was half buried in the ground. The ground crumbled all at once like it was being dug up with a giant piece of machinery. The black soil, the concrete, the asphalt, the trees, the underground water pipes, and the underground gas pipes all became a single mass. It all moved in Kamijou’s direction like a landslide or like a tsunami.

He could not evade it.

Kamijou Touma’s body was simply blown away by the overwhelmingly giant mass.

He was easily knocked back 10 meters by the front edge of the great amount of earth and sand. Then the earth and sand bit at Kamijou’s lower half like the jaws of a living being. He yelled out at the tremendous pressure and saw out of the corner of his eye that Curtana Original had been pulled from the disk-shaped shield. The giant construction flew through the air, struck Buckingham Palace, and further damaged the already crumbling building.

“Ghaaaaaaaaahhhh!!”

Kamijou’s legs had been buried up to the thighs and he forcibly pulled them out. There was a terrible hot feeling in his right thigh. He looked down and saw a broken piece of a tree branch about as thick as a ball-point pen sticking into it.

Villian ran over to him yelling something, but the pain made him dizzy, so he

couldn’t tell what she was saying. Villian nervously hesitated not sure how to treat him.

Kamijou bit down on his sleeve to make sure he didn’t bite his tongue.

Then he grabbed the branch stuck in his leg, checked how it felt with his trembling fingers, and then pulled it out all at once.

He did not utter an audible scream.

A significant amount of blood flowed out and Kamijou gritted his teeth so hard he thought they would break.

“Weren’t you being a bit too naïve?” Carissa looked calmly over at Kamijou as he tried to suppress the pain. “You may have a mysterious power in your hand, but it is completely absurd to think that a flesh-and-blood human can even touch the leader of the angels. How do you think you can win this? Even the very first condition you need to meet to do this simply can’t happen.”

The difference in their strengths was so great that he could not even touch her.

As long as she remained in the United Kingdom, she could wield the power of Michael.

Second Princess Carissa was most likely even more powerful than Acqua of the Back. The exact theories and techniques behind them may have been different, but the strange objects created from the severing of dimensions reminded Kamijou of Misha Kreutzev’s water wings.

“Thinking that you can win if you fight is not your mistake.”

Carissa lowered the end of Curtana Original once more.

The sound of gas escaping from the black soil that had been destroyed in the previous attack could be heard.

“Your mistake lies in thinking that this is on a level where you can survive by hiding behind a shield or running away. This is what the leader of the angels, what the head of state, is.”

No mercy to those who opposed her.

Punishment from heaven was a one-sided rain of destruction. The only option remaining to the people was to earnestly prostrate themselves before her in an attempt to quell her anger.

The scale had reached an area that seemed as if it were from a legend.

Before Kamijou stood a woman who had created a legend of her own.

And she was…

“Second Princess…Carissa…”

“I’m the head of state, you fool.”

For an instant, Carissa showed an expression of displeasure and then she lightly tapped the end of Curtana Original onto the already destroyed asphalt.

Immediately afterwards, the sound of gas leaking out stopped.

The sound of the flammable gas leaking from the broken underground gas pipes stopped.

Immediately after that, the night scenery behind Second Princess Carissa turned into a crimson explosion.

The explosion itself did not reach Kamijou. However, the shockwave flew past Carissa and mercilessly struck the boy.

“Gh…bh!?”

Kamijou’s breathing stopped like he had run into a wall and his feet left the ground. Villian flew up into the air next to him.

They remained in the air for a second and a half.

Despite Carissa being closer to the blast than Kamijou, she showed no sign of pain. She smiled at her floating targets and kicked the ground sending herself forward as if the explosion were a convenient tailwind.

Yes, the explosion of flames spreading across the entire area had not been an attack for Carissa.

It had been nothing more than a means of reinforcing her movement.

With Carissa's light footstep, came an explosive noise more terrible than the gas explosion.

Crushing the ground underfoot, she flew forwards. It seemed more like she was stabbing through space than just moving forward. After finally landing, Kamijou stumbled a bit and tried to regain his balance. As he did, he was almost completely defenseless.

He immediately brought up his right hand, but it was of no use.

Carissa did not just use her strength. She paid attention to Kamijou's movements and twisted Curtana Original in a diagonal trajectory aiming for his neck through a gap in his defenses.

Every dimension along the path of the sword was sliced.

The belt-shaped cross section object appeared following the sword.

Kamijou thought in his head while he watched the path of that blade that could easily slice right through a scientific nuclear shelter or a magical cathedral.

Curtana Original was not the only threat.

Carissa was the person who had almost perfectly carried out a coup d'etat in a powerful nation like the United Kingdom.

The second princess excelled at military matters and she probably had some knowledge of martial arts.

"Die."

That simple word reached Kamijou's brain.

Immediately afterwards, a dull noise shook his brain.

Kamijou Touma's vision grew hazy.

His feet left the ground and he lost all sense of gravity.

His breathing stopped.

And…

(I'm…alive?)

At the feeling of the clothes on his back being forcefully grabbed, Kamijou returned to his senses.

After a bit of distance, he saw the place he had been standing in just before. Curtana Original had merely sliced through thin air and the second princess clicked her tongue at that result.

That had been something Kamijou Touma simply could not have pulled off on his own.

"…It looks like I finally found a good way to pay you back a bit," said a clear female voice.

At the same time, the feeling of something grabbing his back disappeared and he was lowered gently to the ground. Looking over, he saw that Villian had been recovered along with him. The third princess looked up at the person who had rescued her with a blank look on her face.

Kamijou turned around.

Standing there was…

"Kanzaki…?"

"It is not just me. The others will be here soon," Kanzaki said smoothly as she took her eyes off of Kamijou just once. "Index, please carry out a magical analysis. It is possible you will not have the spells related to Curtana in your 103,000 grimoires due to pressure from the Royal Family, but you can reanalyze it with the magical knowledge you do have, correct?"

"So you want to steal control of it or seal its powers? Understood."

Index had arrived as well because she had been travelling with Kanzaki after the large truck had been destroyed. Kamijou looked at her with a dumbfounded look on his face and she responded with a snort.

One of the world's fewer than 20 Saints and the grimoire library that possessed the knowledge of grimoires from all across the world.

Despite being faced with two people who held great value for the magic side, Carissa did not look at all worried.

"Do you really think some rank and file soldiers who couldn't even arrive to the battle on time can take a leading part?"

"We were held up due to a certain ignorant princess causing a mess in the city. I had to prevent a few theaters from being crushed with civilians still inside."

She had stopped the 100 meter objects with her flesh-and-blood body.

Kanzaki calmly stated this frightening fact and reached for the hilt of her sword.

"…And I do not intend to resolve this all on my own. I have comrades I can trust to watch my back."

Part 5

The Saint Kanzaki Kaori and Second Princess Carissa.

A scorching tension ran between the two women.

No concrete physical phenomenon was going to act as a trigger.

Their thoughts would trigger the beginning of the fight.

“!!”

“!!”

Kanzaki moved first.

She started to draw her sword…and then used 7 wires instead.

Nanasen.

Holding Curtana Original, Carissa’s response to the wires simultaneously attacking from different angles was…

“If you hold back against an enemy like me…you will die.”

A tremendous noise rang out.

The next thing Kamijou knew, Kanzaki and Carissa had their blades locked together at extremely close quarters. Carissa had merely rushed in and swung her sword, but Kamijou hadn’t been able to see even that simple action.

“So you can fight on the level of this dimension-severing attack? With two attacks that can slice through anything, some inconsistencies or contradictions may be created between the two laws.”

“…Your movements are different from before. It seems you too will get tripped up if you hold back.”

Those words had been intended to protect Kamijou, but the boy himself knew in his heart it wasn’t true.

His instincts told him that the princess who excelled at military matters may regulate herself, but she did not “hold back”.

“At any rate, this thing can be quite difficult to use. You need to ensure that unnecessary side effects and openings are not created while paying the price required by the situation to get the desired result. The ability to make strategies that prevent unneeded expenditure, reductions, or shortness of breath is a needed skill.”

The two repelled each other’s weapon and then swung their own blade again.

Their bodies blurred.

From there, they entered a series of attacks and defenses where Kamijou had a hard time determining where exactly they were. Continuous explosive noises as if from a machine gun continued as sparkling objects flew between the two women. Around Kanzaki were broken wires and around Carissa were the fangs of wreckage that appeared with each strike.

The situation was not one Kamijou could directly help with, but Imagine Breaker was still an irregular threat to Curtana Original.

(Then the only thing I can do is…!!)

Kamijou made up his mind and ran in a route around their battle. He was attempting to move outside of Carissa’s vision. Even if that was actually impossible, he was making sure Carissa had to keep an eye on him.

“Heh. How brave of you,” Carissa said to him having realized what he was trying to do and while continuing to cross swords with Kanzaki at high speed. “But it will just get you killed.”

An explosive noise rang out as one of the pieces of dimensional wreckage that had naturally been created in her fight, one with a pointed end, was knocked back towards Kamijou with her heel.

It was much like a lance thrown by a powerful soldier.

“!?”

Kamijou frantically twisted his body, but an injury raced along his cheek. It was more like a scrape from falling on some rocks on the beach than a cut from a blade.

Seeing that, Kanzaki ignored her own danger and yelled out.

“Kamijou Touma!!”

“Don’t worry about me! Push forward!!” yelled Kamijou to keep Kanzaki from

switching over to a strategy that would prevent others from being caught up in the fight.

That was when the reinforcements arrived.

The Amakusa Church showed up armed with swords, spears, axes, hammers, bows, and staffs. Tatemiya Saiji with his Flamberge and Itsuwa with her Friuli Spear stood at the center of them.

The former Agnese Forces showed up with Agnese armed with her Lotus Wand, Lucia armed with her giant wheel, Angelene armed with her numerous gold coin bags, and the other nuns armed with various other spiritual items.

Orsola Aquinas, Sherry Cromwell with her golem, and others were also gathered. It didn’t look like much of anyone was missing from the original group that had entered London.

Having arrived late, they first looked on in shock at the way Kanzaki and Carissa were fighting and then held their ground beginning to assist. Some aimed between the two fighting women's battle to hit Carissa with long distance attacks and others started in for close quarters combat as a group to lower Kanzaki’s burden.

Carissa clicked her tongue.

“Ah, you’re really going to make me take on unnecessary costs, aren’t you? I suppose I should have left a few knights to deal with people like you.”

Even so, the second princess was not defeated.

While continuing to exchange blows with Kanzaki, Carissa used even the flow of created dimensional wreckage as part of her strategy. She created objects that had sharp ends like giant fangs or ribs and sent them flying in all directions. They blocked attacks rushing in at tremendous speed from different directions, acted as walls to stop people from rushing in, and acted as projectiles to counterattack with.

As Kamijou frantically evaded those attacks, he was reminded of a game of otedama.

Carissa had two hands, but only one weapon. Even so, she managed to respond to attacks and actions from hundreds of enemies at the same time. The back alley street fight strategy of using a large group to create a wave of people that completely washed away an individual didn't even work on her.

And then the Griffin Skies returned to the fight. Moving along with the red fortresses in the sky, the 20 meter lances started moving along the ground again. One of them plowed into the Golem Ellis that Sherry Cromwell controlled blowing it away. Having received that powerful strike, the mass of stone came to pieces in midair and rained down on the heads of the former Agnese Forces.

Seeing Agnese and Lucia franticly attempt to evade, Kanzaki clicked her tongue.

She turned towards her fellow Amakusa members and spoke.

"Split into a Carissa team and a Griffin team! Those mobile fortresses are at an altitude between 20 and 50 meters…That's high enough for Peter's Anti-Flight spell to work. Ushibuka, Kouyagi, Nomozaki! Can you three put together a spell to bring them down!?"

"We can, but they have a giant shield protecting them. I don't know if we can get through that!!"

Despite saying that, Ushibuka and the others quickly started to take action.

With the Golem Ellis destroyed, the Griffin Sky turned around again and moved in for the Amakusas, but it suddenly lost its balance. The giant lance rushing along the surface struck the black soil and created a tsunami of dirt and sand. The spiritual item held more destructive force than its mass or speed indicated it should have.

However, it was not brought down.

The unsteady Griffin Sky regained its balance and continued its attack run on the Amakusas.

"Oh, shi-…!!"

"No, that was enough!!" Kanzaki said, cutting Ushibuka off as she used her Saint's strength to rush forward. Her target was the giant lance that had lost

speed from contacting the ground. Kanzaki grabbed the lance with both hands from the side where it did not have its explosive destructive power as a spiritual item. She spun her body by twisting her hips to spin it around.

The giant lance and the Griffin Sky were linked using its shadow.

By grabbing the lance and swinging it around like that, Kanzaki caused the Griffin Sky above to rotate around like it was caught in a tornado.

It was possible that the magical connection to the lance could be severed in case the lance got caught on a solid fortress, but it was no use. Kanzaki was not simply spinning the Griffin Sky around with her strength. She was also using high level magic to obstruct any kind of emergency cancel while at the same time using her physical strength as a Saint.

As Kanzaki swung around the Griffin Sky, 4 of the same types of mobile fortresses got caught in it and formed a single mass. To finish off her attack, Kanzaki changed the angle of the giant “axis” she was swinging around to a straight line down.

It was like she was wielding an incredibly giant morning star.

And of course, her target was Second Princess Carissa and Curtana Original.

There was an incredibly loud noise, but it had not been caused by the impact of the numerous Griffin Skies.

It was the sound of Carissa stabbing Curtana Original upwards slicing the morning star apart with a single strike.

“Dammit!! That was a hammer made up of 5 mobile fortresses!” yelled the old Isahaya in defense of Kanzaki.

Meanwhile, Itsuwa spoke loudly to encourage the others while wielding her Friuli Spear.

“B-but now we know that they can be brought down! Let’s continue breaking into groups and increase our attacks on the Griffin Skies. The more of them we can take out, the more people can focus on Carissa which should increase our chances of victory!!”

They nodded, split into two groups with no discussion on who went where, and then headed off to their respective foes.

After having temporarily left the battle line to her comrades, Kanzaki controlled her breathing to recover some of her lost stamina and then lightly jumped over in Kamijou's direction.

"I hate to say it, but it looks like I really am going to have to rely on your right hand. Can you negate Carissa's dimensional slicing attack itself?" Kanzaki continued to jump around deflecting the white objects as she spoke to Kamijou in a low voice. "It is a powerful slicing attack that also creates projectiles. Negating even one strike would greatly shake the strategy she has built up and it might create an opening I could exploit."

"I'll try, but I can't guarantee anything." Kamijou clenched his right fist. "I just can't grasp the rules behind it. Before you got here, I tried a couple of times and it worked sometimes and didn't work sometimes."

Then one of the red Griffin Skies was shot down by a barrage of pitch black darkness from the distant Selkie Aquarium. With the passenger plane-sized object falling in their direction, Kanzaki grabbed Kamijou and jumped 200 meters away.

"In China, there is a legend of three different swords. For the strongest among them, it gives no feeling of having killed someone upon killing them and the person killed does not even realize it and continues living. …Well, it is really just a metaphor used for ideological teaching, but it seems Curtana can truly accomplish that metaphor."

"?"

"Basically, the cutting strike is simply too sharp, so there is a bit of a lag before any signs of the object being sliced show up. The cross section wreckage does not appear in the three dimensional world until 1.25 seconds after the dimensions are sliced."

"…You made that analysis during that high speed battle?" Kamijou said in complete shock.

"I had to," Kanzaki simply responded. "The only magical phenomenon is the

ability to sever dimensions. The dimensional wreckage is nothing more than a natural phenomenon brought about by the magic. It is like the relationship between magical fire and the ash the fire creates. Your right hand can negate the strike itself, but it can do nothing about the wreckage created afterwards."

"So…"

"If you attack the area Curtana passes through within 1.25 seconds after the attack, you can negate the strike and prevent the dimensional wreckage from appearing."

1.25 seconds.

A time accurate past the decimal like that was not something a mere high school student could have a real feel for.

"So it's a cross-counter where I'm completely screwed if I fuck it up…"

"I am not telling you to go in and finish this. I am merely asking you to reach out if Carissa attempts to create a gigantic object with large scale and long distance slice and it is within your reach."

"Understood. So I just wait for a good opportunity."

Kanzaki tapped his shoulder as a sign of trust before she gathered strength in her abdomen to jump back into the fray around Carissa.

However, the situation did not wait around.

With a tremendous noise, a giant flower opened up with the second princess at its center. The flower was made up of deadly sharp white flower petals woven together. The projectiles shot in all directions and blew the primarily Amakusa close quarters fighters a great distance away.

"Itsuwa!! Tatemiya!?" Kamijou yelled, but Carissa opened her mouth to speak before they could respond.

"Oh, are you neglecting to guard your comrades so you can discuss strategy? It's like you're asking me to kill them."

As she finished speaking, the second princess jumped.

She must have been borrowing Telesma from Curtana because she jumped 10 meters straight up. Holding up her sword in midair, she aimed for her “target” during her descent. Kanzaki immediately took action.

Kamijou Touma’s right hand held an important role in destroying Curtana Original.

That was why she immediately assumed that Carissa was intending to kill him.

“No! It isn’t me!!”

As Kamijou tried to push Kanzaki out of the way, Carissa swung Curtana in midair. A blank white board was created in midair and the second princess forcefully kicked it.

Her trajectory changed at an acute angle.

Her course changed from one towards Kamijou Touma to one towards Third Princess Villian who was staring in complete surprise.

“!?”

Villian immediately tried to bring her bowgun up, but it was too late.

With a loud impact, Carissa landed near the third princess and dragged her sister off the ground with one hand. By the time Villian raised her head, the end of Curtana Original was already pressed against her throat. That sword had no tip or blade, but it still held the ability to slice through all whole number dimensions.

“You can’t even use any proper magic. Why are you here? Did you succumb to some strange sense of justice? Or were you just afraid of the main fighting force leaving you behind and alone?”

Villian must have gotten some advice from the Anglicans because her bowgun had a number of tricks to it. However, those tricks were nothing but trash to Carissa who held England’s greatest spiritual item, Curtana Original. It drew red, blue, yellow, and green lines with magic of the four elements and their

distribution could form various types of magic, but that level of magic would have no more effect than a child's love fortune.

"Were you just overcome with ecstasy when you helped send my Curtana Original out of control by activating your own magic for the first time down there in the subway? …So you get innocently excited over a single lucky shot? Well, that is the limit of what you can do, little miss princess."

Carissa sneered down at her sister while practically straddling her.

But her expression suddenly froze.

"…So this is it. This is the terrible thing William and the innocent servants and cooks were faced with in order to allow me to escape."

The third princess glared straight back at her older sister.

She glared back to express her intention to win.

"Then it is about time that I stood up to fight. As a princess of this nation, I need to become the kind of person that creates a roof that can protect everyone from this kind of fear!!"

As she yelled, Villian ignored the sword at her throat and prepared her bowgun.

Staring up at Carissa, she unhesitatingly pulled the trigger as if to say she was prepared to die to take out her sister.

She fired a special arrow that had an arrowhead on the tip that functioned as a spiritual item.

"!?"

For the first time, Carissa's expression changed.

All she had done was move her head to the side.

However, that had been enough for her to evade the arrow that her little sister had put her all into.

Even though the bowgun had been altered to make it easier to use for Villian's

slender feminine arms, it would still take at least 5 seconds to load a new arrow.

In that time, Carissa could easily have Curtana Original sever every dimension along with Villian's head.

"It is time for you to sleep, dreamer," Carissa said in a dreadfully expressionless face the likes of which she had not shown before.

And then…

The arrow Carissa had evaded causing it to continue to fly up into the night sky struck the large scale flash spell from Coven Compass.

The arrow Villian had been using had magical effects built in. Carissa had assumed they were the type that would widen a wound, but a change occurred in the large scale flash spell once the arrow hit it.

The pure white light turned into a mass of water weighing a few dozen tons and surged ominously in the night sky. The giant mass might have seemed like a whip had it not been more than the size of a radio tower. As its end bent, it got wrapped around one of the red Griffin Skies and headed for Carissa.

(A combination attack!?)

Villian herself did not have the power or knowledge to use magic properly. However, that changed when she could use the massive amount of magic power being sent by Coven Compass. Instead of preparing a huge piece of magic that created a large explosion, Villian just had to use a small piece of magic she could activate herself to trigger that explosion.

And the Anglican Church had Index Librorum Prohibitorum and the 103,000 grimoires she had stored.

With the advice of multiple magicians, she could put together different magical symbols in the arrowhead to make that phenomenon possible.

"Dammit!! A petty trick!?"

Carissa rolled out of the way to avoid the mass of water. Villian forced her faintly trembling hands to pull back the shotgun-like slide and load another

arrow.

“Sister, did you know that I am said to excel in benevolence the same way you are said to excel in military matters?”

“You’re trying to justify relying on others? It pisses me off that I’m sisters with someone like you!!”

Something invisible was emitted around Carissa.

Not backing down, Villian calmly aimed the bowgun into the night sky above Carissa’s head. The fired arrow once again struck Coven Compass’s attack, but Carissa paid it no heed and ran straight for Villian.

Upon striking the giant pillar of light, the arrow turned to a large number of golf ball-sized spheres that rained down on Carissa. But Carissa borrowed Curtana’s power to exceed the human level of movement. She made quick zigzags to evade the downpour while continuing to get closer to Villian.

“This is the limit of what relying on others can get you!!”

Carissa swung Curtana Original at Villian who now truly had nothing left at her disposal.

The timing gave her no chance to evade or defend.

All that was left was for the third princess’s head to fall to the ground, but…

“Yes, this is the peak of what relying on others can get me, sister.”

A tremendous noise rang out.

It was the sound of a great number of footsteps. Villian’s body disappeared from in front of Carissa and was replaced by Tatemiya, Itsuwa, the other Amakusas, and the other close quarters combat fighters.

Their speed was clearly different from before.

That vanguard was clearly 3 or 4 times faster than before and Carissa gritted her teeth as she swung Curtana Original to create some dimensional wreckage to

deal with them.

(So that downpour of spheres wasn't an attack! It was a boost for physical abilities!!)

As she fought at high speed, Carissa stared at Villian who now stood a distance away.

Having been lowered to the ground by Kanzaki, the third princess spoke with a confidence she never had before.

"That is why I told you I am the princess that excels at benevolence."

"Hah! Do you truly intend to win with such shallow thinking!?"

Carissa fell back and gave a large swing of Curtana Original. The spell that boosted the vanguard's physical abilities using Coven Compass's power had buried into the ground like bullets, so she created a giant 100 meter piece of dimensional wreckage that dug up the ground itself. She then destroyed every single one of the hundreds of cores that were supporting the magic.

(It's over, Villian. Once I stop them, I will chop you to pieces in a public execution!!)

Carissa then swung Curtana Original with all her might by swinging her whole body around.

However, the dimensions were not sliced.

There was no resistance as if it had just slipped out and Carissa frowned.

The cause had been a boy named Kamijou Touma.

That's right.

That boy had already been asked by Kanzaki Kaori to swing his fist up when Carissa attempted to make a large scale, long distance slice into the dimensions.

With what sounded like the snap of a whip, the partially sliced dimensions returned to normal.

As if in unison with that “misfire”, Third Princess Villian fired her bowgun into the night sky once more.

(Is it coming…!?)

Carissa instinctively held Curtana Original up above her head to defend against a large combination attack with Coven Compass.

But the third princess’s benevolence did not end there.

Next, some words rang out.

“B A O C D!! (Distort the trajectory. Alter it to head down!!)”

Those words belonged to the girl who had accurately memorized 103,000 grimoires. She was using a method of interception called Spell Intercept that was meant to interfere with another’s magic.

However, she did not use it on Carissa’s Curtana Original.

The girl, Index, had not yet fully analyzed the spell controlling Curtana.

In her hand was a communications spiritual item connected to Coven Compass.

In other words, she had altered the supposedly straight trajectory of the large scale flash spell.

“Wha-…?”

For the first time, Second Princess Carissa’s expression turned to one of surprise instead of one of anger.

The giant pillar of light fired by Coven Compass bent at a right angle as if to avoid the arrow fired by Villian’s bowgun. Its trajectory changed to one heading straight down from the sky, pierced through the Griffin Skies in the way, and headed straight for Carissa through an opening in Curtana Original’s defenses.

There was an explosion.

The explosion was so great that it knocked away even the magicians spread out around Carissa.

Kamijou Touma's sense of hearing was blown away.

A great amount of dust flew up into the night sky. A crater with a radius of greater than 20 meters had formed around the area where the large scale flash spell had struck. The Amakusas and the other close quarters fighters stood back up coughing.

Kamijou started to wonder if they had overdone it.

He started to worry about the enemy, but then he learned just how wrong he had been to do so.

"*…I have to admit, that was effective.*"

A chill ran down Kamijou's spine.

The atmosphere of relief that had spread around the area vanished in an instant.

The mountain of dust was blown away from a whirlwind in the center. Standing there was Second Princess Carissa holding Curtana Original. Her red leather-covered dress had mud covering it and it was ripped in places. Some parts of her skin seemed to be oozing some red liquid, but she was still doing quite well and Curtana was not broken.

(Seriously…?)

Kamijou realized his legs were trembling slightly.

He was reminded of the seemingly eternal fights in RPGs with monsters that had massive amounts of HP.

(She can take a direct hit from an attack of that level? I don't know the specifics, but that barrage is meant to attack fortresses. Ignoring the application and overall battle ability, that attack might have had more raw destructive power than one of Kanzaki's attacks. She took a direct hit from that and got nothing more than a few scratches!?)

"…It really looks like we can't do anything about her without first destroying

Curtana Original," Kanzaki muttered with a bitter expression.

With an enemy that couldn't be defeated even with that attack, Kamijou seriously wondered how he was supposed to get close enough to her to use his right hand.

Meanwhile, Carissa rested her sword on her shoulder and looked around the night sky.

There had originally been around 20 Griffin Skies, but the long distance attacks from Coven Compass and Selkie Aquarium in addition to the attacks from the Anglicans on the ground had almost completely wiped them out. Only one was still barely managing to fly with its damage, but it lost its balance and crashed as Carissa watched.

"It looks like this is the limit of unmanned weapons. No, it was because I used them for interception when they are designed to attack fortresses. There may not be a real problem with their specs."

"At any rate, you're the only one left now. If we push forward now…"

"What? Do you think you leveled up by defeating some lower level enemies or something? You apparently don't have a very high estimation of the head of state wielding Curtana Original."

Carissa moved her gaze back from the night sky and looked over at Kamijou with the sword still on her shoulder. She reached her other hand for the open cleavage of her dress and pulled out a small radio.

"And I never said anything about those being the only 'lower level enemies' at my disposal."

"!?"

Kamijou focused on Carissa's radio thinking she was going to call in yet a different type of mobile fortress.

However, that was not what she was doing.

First of all, why was she using a normal radio instead of a magical spiritual

item?

At any rate, Carissa spoke into the radio.

“Calling the destroyer Wimbledon that is currently patrolling in the Strait of Dover. Prepare one of the cruise missiles loaded with a bunker cluster warhead. Set the detonation depth of the warhead for minus 5 meters and aim the missiles for Buckingham Palace…Fire immediately.”

The first person to stiffen at those words was of course Kamijou Touma of the science side.

“A-a bunker cluster!?”

“Oh, you’re familiar with them? They are special warheads developed to destroy military shelters. They scatter around 200 smaller bombs in the air, so I would have been taking out my own forces if I had fired this while the Griffin Skies were still here.”

As Carissa held Curtana Original in one hand and the radio connected to the destroyer in her left, her most villainous smile yet spread across her face.

“I was planning on firing this after creating a bit more of a sense of danger that brought my mother here, but the Griffin Skies were defeated ahead of schedule. I have no choice but to move the schedule up a bit.”

“Shit!! That warhead will blow away an area with a radius of 3 kilometers in every direction!! Buckingham Palace isn’t going to be the only place hit. One shot will be enough to do serious damage to London!!”

“You can shout all you want, but a cruise missile is quite fast. With the Concorde and the Eurofighter, France and other EU countries have been demanding quite a bit of money for development, but that has strengthened this country’s supersonic technology. I believe the obsession with the shape of the cruise missile’s stowable wings have brought them to the level of being at or near Mach 5 at low altitude. It won’t even take one minute to travel the 100 kilometers.”

“Dammit!!”

Three kilometers in sixty seconds. That wasn’t a distance human legs could take

someone. That may be different for a Saint like Kanzaki, but most of the Anglicans there would not make it in time.

“I won’t let you do that,” said Kanzaki Kaori cutting off Kamijou’s thoughts.

She checked over the wires in her hand.

“I will set up a defense barrier in the air to intercept them. A range of 3 kilometers in every direction and about 200 smaller explosives spreading out… That is not an impossible scale to deal with!!”

“It’s true that you may be able to deal with a bunker cluster using magic.”

Carissa smiled. She was surely only standing there because she was confident she could escape the blast unscathed using Curtana Original’s power.

She pointed up into the night sky with the hand holding the radio.

There was an artificial point of light there that was clearly not a star.

“But you don’t have time for that kind of preparation.”

“!!”

Kanzaki strung the seven wires up into the night sky as if the repel Carissa’s words. The wires formed a three dimensional magic circle and bluish white light ran across them creating a thick wall covering up an entire city block.

That was the special magic of a Saint that was an order of magnitude greater than normal magic.

However…

“You’re defenseless. As I expected.”

“…!? Kanzaki!!” Kamijou yelled out, but Carissa was faster as she swung Curtana Original while licking her lips.

The tremendous noise of the severing of dimensions was heard as everything turned to rubble. Kanzaki barely managed to avoid the 100 meter cross section, but that delayed her from preparing her defensive spell. The thick wall that was

supposed to be covering the night sky was torn apart in a straight line.

The cruise missile continued to approach.

Kanzaki started to construct the defensive spell again, but she did not make it in time.

At about 4000 meters in the air, the tube shaped missile split into four pieces. With the outer shell removed, the 200 explosives inside appeared and spread out into the sky. They rained down like spears because they used the energy from their high altitude fall to penetrate into shelters buried deep in the ground.

Carissa had said the detonation depth was set at negative five meters.

Because she wanted to blow away Kamijou and the others who were on the surface, she had set it to explode above ground.

Kamijou thought he heard someone yelling “run”.

However, he could not move and merely stared dumbfounded in Carissa’s direction.

She was his enemy.

England’s second princess spread her arms wide as if to accept the light’s blessing. As she looked up at the 200 points of light in the night sky with satisfaction, Carissa noticed Kamijou’s gaze. She returned his gaze and put on a new expression that could not at all be described as a smile.

She then said something, but Kamijou could not tell what it was.

Immediately afterwards, the bunker cluster attacked Buckingham Palace.

There was no sound.

Kamijou’s eyes could see nothing but pure white.

All he could sense was that his body was being thrown somewhere. The great number of explosives did not explode in the air or on the surface. They first dug down into the ground and then exploded back up from under the ground.

He lost consciousness at least for a moment.

He groaned a bit, moved his fingers, and then finally realized that he was still alive.

He could tell he was coughing, but he couldn't hear it. He tried to turn his head, but his body would not do what he told it to. Even so, he managed to awkwardly move his mud-covered arms and legs in order to slowly stand up. It was the first time he had felt that surprised that he possessed all his limbs.

He looked around.

Surprisingly, the fire and destruction had not spread into the city of London. It may have been due to the defensive barrier Kanzaki had put up partway through. Most of the 200 explosives had been detonated early in the sky. The ones that had come down on top of Kamijou and the others had fallen through a gap in the barrier that had been sliced open by Curtana Original. The destruction caused by the ones that had made it through had been weakened by the defensive spells cast by the magicians.

But…

"Index…?"

Kamijou ignored his own dirt covered head and looked around in shock.

No response came.

"Kanzaki, Itsuwa?"

The boy's voice echoed in the silence.

Dirt had been torn up, buildings had collapsed, and his own footing was shaky. Standing in the middle of a burnt field, Kamijou somehow managed to move his trembling lips.

"Sherry, Agnese! Oriana!! Dammit…Orsola, Lucia, Angelene! Tatemiya, Villian!! Fuck. Someone…anyone, please answer!!"

A few moans came in response, but no clear voices did.

Mostly everyone had collapsed. Some people may have been buried. That scene caused more intense damage to Kamijou’s heart than the shockwave did to his body. He could not even hazard a guess at how many levels of trump cards their opponent had. Kamijou’s heart simply couldn’t keep up.

A single figure stood in the center of it all seeming to transcend the scene.

It was Second Princess Carissa.

The woman in the red dress resting Curtana Original on her shoulder spoke.

“Now then. Do you still have any hope left?”

She smiled and brought the radio closer to her mouth with her other hand.

She spoke mercilessly and purposefully letting him hear.

“Destroyer Wimbledon, prepare to fire another bunker cluster.”

Part 6

First Princess Rimea had removed her trademarked monocle. In its place, she was peering through an antique telescope that looked like it was something used by a sea captain during the Age of Exploration.

(…Oh, dear. And this country’s magicians should have known just how fearsome an existence the head of state with Curtana Original is. I suppose the Anglican remnants are on the verge of destruction upon being given a clear view of what that existence is.)

Rimea was hiding on top of a building in London. As she watched the distant battlefield, a smile appeared on her lips.

A voice reached her ears from a communications spiritual item.

She had avoided using it up to that point, but she had determined that Carissa was too focused on the area near Buckingham Palace to detect the origin of the magic power.

“Hey, miss. Our youths have done a sweep of Edinburgh and it seems everything is just as you predicted.”

The voice belonged to a kind older man. He used none of the usual concern of

one speaking with a member of the Royal Family, but that actually made Rimea's smile widen. After all, he did not even know she was a princess and she preferred these kinds of people that did not try to use her for her position.

"So, I can assume that that is the 'grave'?"

"The scale is a little smaller, but your level of accuracy is quite something. This is clearly suitable to be the grave of the king of an entire culture. If you stuffed Khufu's pyramid into a single room, you would probably end up with something like this. I'll send you the data." With those last words, a black dot that looked like ink appeared on the parchment lying next to Rimea. Starting from that dot, diagrams and cursive letters started appearing as if an invisible quill were writing on the parchment.

Rimea put back on her monocle and looked over the numbers before nodding in satisfaction.

"I see… Now we've more or less grasped the aim of the coup d'etat's leader," she muttered as she moved her gaze from the parchment. "*It's true that this makes it reasonable to not kill them*."

"…Hey, miss. Where did you get all this dangerous information? I know you claim to be a member of an old magician family that controls Stonehenge, but…"

"Hee hee hee. If you want to reveal the secrets of a beauty, you should get to know her a little better first."

After that remark, Rimea severed the connection.

She then changed where the spiritual item was directed and activated it again.

Thanks to her reliable comrades who did not know who she really was, she now had all the necessary pieces.

Afterwards, she simply had to take an action most befitting of the princess said to represent intellect.

At that time, all of the knights in charge of guarding the Second Princess at Buckingham Palace were collapsed. They had been “punished” in order to bring the knights back together after doubts started forming about Carissa’s control of Curtana Original.

It was true that they had started to be disheartened at her lack of control over the blade.

However, that thinking had been naïve.

Even if she had lost control once, Carissa’s overwhelming power with Curtana Original had simply been too much for the young knights to do anything about.

A presence moved amid them.

One of the suits of armor lying around like pieces of junk slowly rose up.

He wondered where he was.

He was not within Buckingham Palace where their blood had been shed. He seemed to be inside a large building. From a distance, he could see intermittent flashes and could hear explosions. There was a time lag between the flashes and the explosions like between lightning and thunder.

The young knight moved his hurting head around as if he were looking for something. What had awoken him from unconsciousness was a female voice coming from a communications spiritual item.

“Listen. This is First Princess Rimea of the Royal Family.”

Normally, receiving a transmission like that would have required a certain obligatory vigilance, but his head was so hazy due to the pain that the he couldn’t recall the proper process. Instead, he simply listened to the voice silently.

“Due to a report from one of my spies in Edinburgh, I now know the true aim of Carissa’s coup d’etat. Most likely, she has not informed you in the knights of this, but this is the true goal hidden in my sister’s heart.”

(…)

The young knight slowly looked around.

It seemed he was the only one alive amid the pile of bodies.

He wondered why.

The reason he had survived after having his muscles, bones, organs, and nerves injured by the now tyrannical Carissa was a mystery, but so was whoever that took him unconscious from Buckingham Palace.

However, he did not think too deeply about it.

Whatever the reason, it did not change the fact that he was merely a sacrificial pawn even after giving his all and risking his life for Second Princess Carissa's revolution. He no longer even felt the natural anger at being betrayed. The young knight almost collapsed again overtaken by an overwhelming lethargy.

"As the representative that rules over this country's military, she feels more responsibility than anyone over the threat the Roman-Russian alliance poses to the United Kingdom. The country's military strength has been robbed using the treaty banning cluster bombs and other types of weapons and the Eurotunnel bombing provoked the nation itself. Carissa came to the following conclusion."

The young knight who was about to collapse heard a different noise.

He wasn't alone.

He heard the sound of scraping metal and turned around. He saw a fellow knight trying to stand up despite his hazy mind.

"She concluded that England would lose its value and dignity as a nation as things were going. Just for being British, other countries would look down on people and an era of persecution would begin. So Carissa decided that she had no choice but to maintain the country's value and dignity via military force so the British people would not be destroyed by the era of change that war would bring."

At first, they were not listening carefully to Rimea's words.

The intense pain running across their entire body was too much for that and they

had just been subjected to Carissa's tyranny. Any kind of words that seemed to defend her sounded like deception to them.

"At the same time, Carissa was worried. Due to her talent in military matters, she understood better than anyone the double-sided fear that Curtana's strength brought. If the head of state did not have Curtana, if the monarchy that had been so absolute were not there, would she have a chance to listen to the voices of the people and adjust the direction the country was headed in before the war with the Roman Catholic Church became that bad?"

However, the young knights realized something bit by bit.

Their muscles, bones, organs, and nerves had supposedly been damaged. Carissa had supposedly carried that out as a punishment. She had given them such horrible pain that it would bind all who watched it with fear. For that reason, their bodies had supposedly been injured to the very core.

So why had they been able to rise up so easily?

They hadn't fallen back down due to broken bones and they did not have any after effects that would stick with them for the rest of their lives. It was almost as if someone had aimed for but purposefully missed all the vital points of a human.

And why had there been no deaths after such brutality?

"At the same time that Carissa became determined to use Curtana Original as a trump card against France and the Roman Catholic Church, she also planned on completely sealing that ultimate weapon once the fighting was over. …She wanted to create a system where someone could stop a leader that was leading the country down the wrong path. To do that, simply utterly destroying Curtana was not enough."

Rimea's voice continued on in the otherwise silent room.

"Even if she killed every member of the Royal Family and destroyed both Curtana Original and Second, it would be possible for a new royal bloodline to appear after 100 or 1000 years. The ruins of the destroyed blades could be analyzed to develop a Curtana Third or a new spiritual item that we cannot even imagine now. …After all, Curtana Original was thought to have been lost to

history, but Carissa managed to acquire it after such a long time. While that helped Carissa gain the power she needed, it also pained her greatly."

The young knights could not answer their own questions, so they merely listened.

"The queen and the knights' ruling structure constructed from Curtana and the All-English Continent has 'reserve power' built in. Even when the Original was lost, their rule continued because they had purposefully left behind the ability to make a Second. For example, the Original had the clue for the analysis needed to create a Second prepared within it and forethought had gone into making sure the structure of the All-English Continent would not be thrown into chaos when the Second was activated once the Original was lost. …Carissa wanted to ensure that not just the currently existing Original and Second were sealed, but that the possibility of creating yet another Curtana at a later point was sealed as well."

One of the young knights looked out the window.

He saw Carissa's back as she fought within the grounds of the destroyed palace.

He was a few kilometers away, but he had a search spell cast on him for sniping, so that did not matter. He could see the unfolding battle at Buckingham Palace as if it were right in front of him.

Carissa seemed to reign supreme in the center of a storm as she used Curtana Original's power to her heart's content and even called in a cruise missile loaded with a bunker cluster warhead. However, she looked somehow sad to the young knight.

"Carissa's aim is to kill every member of the Royal Family that can use Curtana and mess with the currently existing Original and Second in order to destroy the clue for making a Third within them. That way, she could completely prevent a monarch from appearing later who uses Curtana to send the country in the wrong direction. Buckingham Palace's destruction is not just due to the Anglican attack. Carissa has crushed the possibility of a Curtana Third being created by utterly destroying the coded documents and paintings that cannot be decoded by current magicians but are thought to have been analyzed to create Curtana Second. …Once the war with France and the Roman Catholic Church is over, Carissa will destroy and seal Curtana Original and Second and then take the remains deep within her 'grave' for the rest of her life."

Someone slowly stood up.

He was mysteriously able to stand up.

He was not able to do so simply due to the power of the knights alone. Carissa had made sure he would be able to from the beginning. She had made sure the knights who helped her with the coup d'etat would be able to survive. The second princess had become a tyrant all on her own and taken even the responsibility the knights should have had to bear onto her own shoulders.

The young knight thought to himself that he wanted to fight for her. But he also knew that doing so would be the same as following Carissa's orders and letting the coup d'etat succeed.

"My conclusion is that Carissa has two goals. Her first is to protect England by becoming an overwhelming tyrant in order to eliminate France and the Roman Catholic Church even if it makes her a blot on the country's history. Her second is to seal the powerful but terrible weapon that is Curtana and eliminate the incompetent monarchy to ensure that the people are never oppressed by a runaway state. …And even if various factors lead to a new monarchy being formed, it would be weak enough that it would have to listen to the voices of the people preventing it from making the wrong decisions. To carry this out, Carissa intends to make sure the tyrannical crime of wielding the inhuman weapon of Curtana to slaughter all the countries enemies, both external and internal, is carried on her shoulders alone."

If only Carissa could remain the type of person that could not kill the subordinates who doubted her.

She could not be allowed to stray from her path any further.

Surely there was a way to overcome the crisis caused by the Roman Catholic Church without using Curtana Original's power.

Yes, if only the queen and three princesses, Carissa included, could join forces.

And…

Standing atop the building, Knight Leader listened to First Princess Rimea's words.

"I cannot force you to take action. You have families, friends, and lovers that you must protect as well as the country. I will not deny you the option to flee if you want to make sure they do not have to mourn for you."

Knight Leader silently shut his eyes.

Rimea brought her long talk to a close.

"But if any of you pity my sister Carissa, if any of you knights wish to save her not as the second princess but as a mere woman, then will you take up your swords now? She is most likely a woman who can be saved by just that. This is not about the amount of power you can wield. She will be saved just by knowing that there are people truly willing to fight for her."

For a bit, there was nothing but silence.

Most likely, that same silence hung over the entirety of the United Kingdom.

They contemplated what Rimea had said and came to a single conclusion.

Each of them freely came to their conclusion as a knight, as a man, as a human.

(It seems I don't even need to send out an order.)

Knight Leader silently nodded and pulled a sword out of nowhere.

He had lost the power from Curtana and the All-English Continent, so it was simply a silver longsword that could not even change its color to red. However, the naked steel looked stronger than it ever had before.

(Words are not needed because what we must do is clear.)

That knight's sword was once more being used for its proper purpose.

The head of the knights who held it jumped at high speed from building to building.

First Princess Rimea smiled thinly.

Knight Leader had been standing behind her until just a bit ago, but she had not turned around even once.

She did not trust anyone who knew that she was the first princess.

But that was not why she had not turned around. Rimea was not the type to show her back to one she did not trust.

(Carissa started this coup d'etat thinking of the people, but has changed so much in carrying it out. Villian has grown so much by seeing the suffering of the people caused by the coup d'etat.)

Rimea thought as she looked through the telescope once again to check on the battle.

(I wonder if I too have grown "stronger" from all this.)

Part 7

Without wiping the mud from her hair, Villian stared dimly at the back of a certain boy as she lay on the ground. The bunker cluster bomb had just about wiped out the remaining Anglican forces, but that boy continued to oppose Carissa.

Villian was practically on the verge of death like most of the Anglicans when a transmission from her eldest sister Rimea reached her ears.

Had that boy heard the transmission, too? He may have heard the same transmission being broadcast from a spiritual item that had fallen amidst the

rubble in the battlefield, but he might not have.

Either way, he did not waver.

The Anglicans wavered upon learning of Carissa's true aim, but he alone did not.

"What will you do now? The second bunker cluster has been fired! And unlike last time, the magicians don't have any power to spare in order to put up a defensive barrier!!"

"!! Dammit. I'm not giving up!!"

"Ha ha ha!! Do you think I'll send a self-destruct signal to the missile in order to save my life if you destroy Curtana Original? This isn't a nuclear missile we're talking about. That warhead doesn't have a self-destruct!!"

"This isn't over yet!! Selkie Aquarium can send a barrage to take it out!!"

"I suppose that is somewhat realistic… But if they could do that, they would have done so on the previous shot. That might work with a piece of junk from France that lost a good bit of its adaptability because of their stubborn insistence to develop it and produce it in their own country, but this cruise missile will not be so easily shot down!!"

Unlike William Orwell, he was a mercenary without complete principles or ideologies. It was true that he could not always choose the correct option. He had been fooled by Carissa and the knights and had been unable to prevent the coup d'etat from happening.

But that did not stop that boy.

Even if he had made a mistake, he would not give up. No matter how bad the situation became, he would try to find the best strategy to turn the situation around.

That was why this boy did not waver at the current situation.

He may smile and invite in the situation, but he would not hesitate from shock.

Who was more noble, the one who made sure he was right from the beginning or

the one who made sure everyone was smiling in the end?

“Look, here it is! The bunker cluster is here!”

Carissa, the tyrant whose inner thoughts had been revealed by Rimea, spread her arms wide looking up at the night sky.

At one point in the dark sky, the point of light that was the missile appeared.

“It’s over for you, you ignorant fools!! This is the power of the military!!”

“!!”

Betting on a slim chance, the boy looked around the area trying to find a communications spiritual item that connected to either Coven Compass or Selkie Aquarium. However, the mountain of rubble that the palace grounds had become made finding one difficult and his lack of magical knowledge meant he might not have been able to spot one had it been right next to him.

As he searched, the cruise missile approached Buckingham Palace.

If something didn’t change, it would scatter the 200 smaller explosives and an area of the city with a radius of 3 kilometers around the palace would truly be blown away.

And then…

“To zero!!”

A new voice reached Villian’s ears from a distance.

Immediately afterwards, the cruise missile malfunctioned instead of scattering the smaller explosives in every direction. Even when it reached the designated point, the missile’s outer shell did not open, the flame propelling it from the back disappeared, and it fell to a road outside the palace grounds like a wild pitch. The cruise missile had to have weighed quite a bit, but it rolled while bouncing multiple times instead of piercing into the road.

It was an unnatural scene almost as if all of the attack power it had as a weapon had been stripped from it.

As the third princess stared blankly, the sharp sound of the air being sliced reached her ears.

It was the sound of a piece of dimensional wreckage created by Curtana Original.

Carissa had kicked the 3 meter long sharp stake. It came roaring directly towards Villian's face, but it did not hit her.

Knight Leader had suddenly cut in from the side and punched the 3 meter stake away with his right fist.

With a loud impact, blood shot from between his fingers.

But Knight Leader's expression did not change.

He merely looked down at his fist.

"…It seems that it truly does not work on Curtana Original or the phenomena derived from its powers."

"Knight Leader…?" called Villian in a shaking voice, but he did not turn in her direction.

A great number of knights had appeared along with him and he spoke without looking at Villian.

"I will accept my punishment. Once this coup d'etat is over, you may decapitate me if you wish."

He spoke those words with no hesitation.

For the very first time, Knight Leader spoke of what he had helped start as a coup d'etat instead of a revolution.

"However, at least allow us to make the necessary preparations for our judgement with our own hands. My only wish is that the Royal Family can join forces once more and properly face France and the Roman Catholic Church."

As he spoke, Knight Leader readjusted his grip on his sword with his bloody

hand.

He was no longer receiving any power from Curtana Original, so it was merely a knight's longsword that had no special abilities.

"Lady Carissa has managed this much on her own. If she used that power properly and joined forces with the rest of the Royal Family, you could surely defeat the Roman Catholic Church."

As she saw Knight Leader clearly heading into a situation he probably would not survive, Villian's lips seemed to move on their own. As she tried to drag her aching body up, she spoke.

"Wait."

That word was so powerful and sure that no one would have thought the third princess could have spoken it. Knight Leader stopped. Villian already held the power needed to get the head of the knights to turn around.

"Forcing yourself to head to a selfish death would only cause suffering. If you truly want to atone for what you have done, then do something that will make me rejoice. Think for yourself about what you must do. Actions taken of your own will are the ones that have meaning, not actions you are forced to take."

Knight Leader reflected on what she had said.

He then unhesitatingly stepped in between Kamijou and Carissa who were fighting even then.

"Split into two teams. The first will recover and heal the collapsed Anglicans. The other will commence attacks to directly stop Lady Carissa."

After Knight Leader gave his brief instructions, the men wearing beaten up armor quickly began to move. They were not simply following orders. Every one of them, from the very top to the very bottom, were acting of their own will.

"…We will win. *We cannot allow Lady Carissa to remain alone any longer*."

The head of the knights stood next to Kamijou who was evading the giant white objects and attempting to negate Carissa's dimensional slices whenever he had a

chance.

“I apologize for leaving the fate of my country and the fate of my princesses to all of you.”

Kamijou’s response was concise.

He didn’t even look in Knight Leader’s direction.

“Sure. Now let’s work together to stop her.”

The two of them moved at once.

Kamijou moved to negate the dimensional slices. Knight Leader attacked directly to hold back the movements of Curtana Original.

Knight Leader held a longsword. The blade was about 80 cm long and made for use on horseback. He looked down at his own weapon and started muttering with a bitter expression on his face.

“(…So the lengthening truly has been sealed and I cannot use the pattern magic created from a synthesis of spells from different paths of knighthood around the world. I suppose that should be obvious as the power from Curtana is gone. All I can use are the Spell of Thororm that I created with my own power and the support spell for high speed movement. But the Spell of Thororm does not work on Curtana or any of the phenomena derived from its powers. Without the power from Curtana, I cannot even avoid having my sword fighting ability from being drastically reduced.)”

Knight Leader thought about how much of a disadvantage he was at, but he still smiled slightly.

The smile was slightly smug as if he had regained his true self.

“(…I suppose I can only put out half my speed, but this is perfect for stopping her without killing her!!)”

“I see. First it was Villian and her benevolence and now it is Rimea and her intellect!!” Carissa yelled over the clashing of sword on sword.

Yes, Knight Leader's longsword repelled Curtana Original. He had accurately struck the side of the sword where it could not create its dimensional slicing field.

"That speech was purposefully given with the perfect timing! For both the knights and the Anglicans it was just after Curtana Original's power had begun to break their wills! That was why it had such a great effect on them! It was the same as when you drink something sweet after eating something spicy!!"

Carissa's fierce attacks did not stop.

Her attacks and defenses continued against the monsters that were Knight Leader and the rest of the knights like a game of otedama.

"And to top it all off, that was not sent directed at all the knights! She made it sound like it was, but that message was directed at you personally! As she should have. The true pillar supporting the knights is its leader!! Your personal decision has a major effect on the view of the entire group. Having you change your view is a much more effective and predictable way of having the entire faction move than having each and every one of them choose of their own free will. That was a truly cunning speech befitting of the princess of intellect!!"

"I do not mind."

Knight Leader's expression did not collapse as he evaded Carissa's attacks.

His resolve had already hardened.

"Even if it was an act, it still functions as a driving force for me to save you. Being controlled by Lady Rimea and her intellect can be enjoyable, too!!"

"Is that your pride as the head of the knights? But you cannot use your full power without help from Curtana Original. Or do you think you can keep up with me using some weak power from the Second!?"

"Something as trivial as the presence or lack of power will not cause my resolve to waver!!"

"Tch. What a disturbing man!!" Carissa yelled.

However, the knights' fighting spirit had recovered. In fact, it was greater than it had been originally. Their attacks felt more intense than they ever had before. Most likely, the collapsed Anglicans had completely recovered mentally if not physically. Their depth as a group was greater than it had been before. And on top of all that, more knights were gathering from other parts of the United Kingdom, so Carissa could tell she could not play around anymore.

(It pisses me off to do this, but I'm not holding back on the cruise missiles anymore!!)

She gave a large swing of Curtana Original as a diversion and then jumped back to put a good bit of distance between her enemies.

Having opened up a bit of time, she rested Curtana Original on her shoulder and watched Kamijou and the knights attempt to lessen the distance between them and her.

"I wanted to save some for an attack on France, but it looks like I have to use up all the bunker clusters here."

Carissa held a small radio in her hand.

Kamijou looked on in shock and Knight Leader took a challenging step forward.

"My Spell of Thororm cannot seal Curtana Original or the phenomena it creates, but it can turn a bunker cluster's attack power to zero. Are you still going to waste them?"

"If I remember correctly, your defense spell negates the attack power of a chosen object that you perceive as a weapon," Carissa said as if she were double checking with a subordinate about his job.

As she did, she brought the radio up to her mouth.

"In that case, I'll give these instructions: Prepare the cruise missiles loaded with bunker cluster warheads. Prepare the 24 on the Wimbledon at Dover, the 26 from the King Henry VII, the 20 from the Sherwood, the 15 from the Hastings, and the 15 from the Shakespeare. All ships should aim for Buckingham Palace and fire all 80 bunker clusters on my signal. Now then, which one do you think I will hide with an illusion?"

“…!!”

Knight Leader’s body stiffened and a villainous smile appeared on Carissa’s face.

“Of course, I may be bluffing, but it’s all over for you if one gets through. And if I attack with Curtana Original at the same time, I can be doubly sure of my victory. How about I test the essence of a British knight by seeing if you can force back my sword while missing a single missile will spell doom for every single one of you?”

“Tch! We need to stop her!!” Kamijou urged Knight Leader while he rushed towards Carissa clenching his fist.

However, the second princess was faster in pressing the connection button.

Before Kamijou’s fist could reach her, Carissa gave the order of destruction.

“All five destroyers are to fire the cruise missiles…”

Kamijou gritted his teeth, but Carissa looked somehow puzzled.

She then looked up suddenly and jumped back.

In the very next instant, a huge antenna tower used for military transmissions slammed forcefully into the space Carissa had just been standing in.

As he had been heading for Carissa, Kamijou's body was blown back by an explosive gust of wind. Someone was standing atop the wreckage of the giant antenna that lay in the center of a cloud of sand. The large figure spoke as it looked down on Second Princess Carissa.

"Now you cannot send reckless orders to the British military. They are British citizens. They should not be forced to fire on the capital they should be protecting because of some ruthless dictator."

"I see. Once again, you bring nothing but trouble!!"

Carissa's low voice was accompanied by what was likely her most annoyed expression since the coup d'etat began.

The large man jumped down from the antenna tower and stood between Kamijou and Knight Leader.

"It seems I am a bit late. I only have a passing knowledge of science, so it took some time to search out and destroy every military antenna in the area."

A certain mercenary adjusted his grip on the sword he held that was over 3 meters long.

That mercenary was used to both individual battles and wars between groups and he had finally joined the battle.

As usual, his timing was maddeningly good.

Between the lines 5

In the end, it was just an accumulation of ridiculous things.

There hadn't been this one special moment. The rails heading for the worst conclusion had been visible here and there for quite some time.

"In accordance with the majority, the aforementioned weapons will be banned from use."

It hadn't just been the bunker clusters.

Being controlled by the Roman Catholic Church, the EU council had adopted a treaty that specifically banned the weapons that the United Kingdom had primarily been developing. It had been as if they were saying they weren't afraid of provoking an old-fashioned nation.

Apparently, it had started when Elizard still controlled the military. At that time, Britain's nuclear weapons had been banned, but France's had not. The two countries had been split into two different categories because of the difference in power between their bombs, but Britain had been prevented from later developing nuclear weapons with less power. And to top it all off, England had been required to give all their nuclear weapons to France. Officially, this had been because France would be the sole possessor of nuclear weapons within the EU and they would therefore have the technology needed to safely disassemble them, but the real reason was clear.

The "attacks" had been occurring for a long time.

They had escalated and eventually resulted in the disaster that Carissa had seen.

The EU countries had whispered things in the shadows.

"There is no problem as long as you have the protection of the Roman Catholic Church."

"If fault is found in England, they can't stand up to a force of 2 billion people."

"England is just a relic of a bygone era."

"Your prosperity ended at the beginning of the 20th century."

Carissa felt that England’s value as a country was dropping.

Her mother who led the country said that there was no reason to react to such clear provocation.

However, that only led to the surrounding countries taking them lightly and deciding that they could act with impunity regarding England. If the situation had continued, it would have ushered in an age where England would no longer be recognized as a nation and the British people would be ridiculed, would be abused, and would begin to hide that they were British.

That had to be stopped.

The people of England had to retain the ability to live happily.

She had prepared for years. There had been a few different paths she could have taken, but she had naturally chosen one of them from the very beginning. She was a woman who excelled in military matters. She knew nothing other than heading to a mud-covered battlefield with a sword in hand. If she were to succeed, she could not realistically see herself choosing anything other than a coup d’etat.

However, she had done nothing more than prepare.

If certain conditions were not met, she never would have acted on that preparation.

If her mother who led the country was able to restore the country’s dignity via diplomatic means, that wouldn’t have been a problem. If the surrounding countries could have been brought out from under the control of the Roman Catholic Church and had begun to act of their own will, the crisis would have naturally ended.

But…

The Eurotunnel connecting England and France had been bombed.

And at the same time, a plane had been hijacked in order to block the flights to England.

The various checkpoints and borderlines she had strategically set up had all been breached in the worst possible way.

She had determined that she could not wait any longer.

If she did not take that chance, the value of the British people would fall to a position lower than slaves.

In the end, Carissa had taken Curtana Original into her hand.

Despite how much she loathed it, she had grabbed that sword that determined the king.

She had silently decided that she would become a tyrant.

She would become such an overwhelming tyrant that she would leave an indelible blot on history.

She had always been a woman who excelled in military matters and could do nothing but take up a sword and fight. She had only one way to change her country and to change the world.

Carissa had made her decision without telling anyone else.

Once the fight was over, she was prepared to disappear from history along with the two Curtanas. She would head deep down into the grave she had created to sleep eternally without anyone ever knowing what she had done.

Chapter 8: The Queen and the People's General Election. *Union_Jack.*

Part 1

Acqua of the Back and Knight Leader stood next to each other.

Acqua held the spiritual item known as Ascalon and Knight Leader held the longsword that had once been the core of his large weapon.

Knight Leader muttered something that could have been addressed to his old friend and it could have just been something he was saying to himself.

"…It seems the time has once again come for me to entrust my back to you."

"So you cannot switch over to Hrunting? Make sure you do not trip me up."

"Shut it."

After that exchange, Knight Leader swung his longsword lightly and looked forward.

He no longer had to keep a close eye on the other man as he spoke with him. Just like the times when the two of them defeated countless powerful enemies together, he almost carelessly left his trust in the man.

"Let's go. We shall see how far each of us has grown in the past 10 years."

With a tremendous noise, the earth split open.

The ground had simply been unable to withstand the force of the two of them charging forward simultaneously.

Acqua headed to the right and Knight Leader to the left.

As they both circled around, they swung their swords toward Carissa at a speed that was difficult to follow with the naked eye.

“Tch.”

Carissa responded to Acqua. She twisted her body to avoid the 3.5 meter sword while using the momentum of that motion to swing Curtana Original around her body. The dimensional wreckage created acted as a shield that stopped Knight Leader’s longsword.

“You’ll lose your head,” Carissa whispered to Acqua at extreme close quarters.

Immediately afterwards, two slashing attacks clashed. Acqua and Ascalon responded to the diagonal slash sent at them. Keeping Curtana Original’s power in mind, he avoided actually letting the blades strike. Instead, he made sure it was the hand guards near the base of the swords that struck each other.

(…Ow…!?)

Carissa had been fighting a completely one sided sword fight up to that point, so the unexpected recoil surprised her.

The pure shock of the impact forced the two of them backwards. Despite sliding back along the dirt, they were still within range of each other.

They used their next sure-fire attacks.

“!!”

“!?”

Paying no attention to the size of their swords, they both attacked with the intention of getting in a fatal blow. Like in a duel from a Western, the victor

would clearly be decided by just a slight difference.

But…

“Don’t think that…you’re the only two fighting here!!”

“Wha-…?”

Kanzaki Kaori entered from the side despite all her wounds. She had been able to defend against it a bit with her barrier, but the blast from the bunker cluster had taken a toll on her body. Unsurprisingly, the Saint had been the first of the Anglicans to stand back up. She used her attack that could cut even a monotheistic angel, Yuisen. That was a strike that simply could not be ignored, so Carissa changed the trajectory of her sword at the last second to block it.

Of course, she was exposing her body to an attack from Acqua by doing so.

And Knight Leader moved in at the same time.

“Ooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

Not just one, but numerous roars created a unique vibration.

Multiple figures exceeded the speed of sound with a pleasant shock that uplifted the battlefield.

Carissa kicked at Acqua’s legs to affect his balance and the trajectory of his sword altered slightly. Not even waiting for Ascalon to miss her by an incredibly small amount, Carissa repelled Kanzaki’s Shichiten Shichitou with Curtana Original and then jumped back to avoid Knight Leader’s strike.

Unlike before, she was putting all her effort into evading.

However, those three powerful people did not leave it at that.

A storm of sparks headed in a straight line after Carissa. As the attacks approached her from different angles, Carissa kicked up the rubble and dimensional wreckage lying around and swung Curtana Original in order to block, parry, and repel each one. Acqua and Kanzaki sliced through the rubble, turned back the dimensional wreckage, and otherwise used the approaching

obstructions to their advantage.

There was an instant of time between Curtana Original's slice and the creation of the dimensional wreckage.

The four of them continued to clash at a speed that made that instant into a major delay.

The sound of someone sucking in air reached Kanzaki's ears.

In that world in which conversations and even individual words would take too long, that had been what got Carissa's intention across.

The second princess kicked up two pieces of dimensional wreckage that lay at her feet and crashed them together with a similar motion to striking cymbals together. They were destroyed.

Along with a shockwave, fragments spread out like a firework.

"!?"

They all stopped for an instant to brace against the shock. Carissa used the momentum from it to move 50 meters back.

For monsters like them, that was a distance that could be travelled in an instant.

"…I see…"

A single trail of blood was flowing down Carissa's forehead.

She had not been injured by Kanzaki, Acqua, or anyone else. It had been one of the fragments from the pieces of dimensional wreckage Carissa herself had destroyed to give her time to evade.

"It looks like I've exceeded my limit for this game of otedama. Even with this special power, taking on 3 Saint level monsters is rather troublesome."

"I do not believe that everything can be accomplished with only those who are special," said Kanzaki quietly as she used a special method of breathing to restore her strength. "We are only able to go all out because there are people

supporting us. Because you are currently being aimed at by magicians from all directions, you must continue to focus on possible attacks from your blind spots which limits your options."

"Perhaps." Carissa looked around with only her eyes. "It is true that the number of allies one has can determine the victor in the military environment."

The many magicians stared at her waiting to fire long distance attacks at her between the Saints' and Knight Leader's attacks if they had an opening.

"But that is why I never once thought my victory would lie in that direction."

An aura of sadism spread from Second Princess Carissa.

Immediately afterwards, she kicked up the wreckage at her feet with her terrifying strength. Her foot held a limited amount of the leader of the angel's power and the heavy mass of iron she kicked shot off like a bullet despite being over 5 meters long.

She had not kicked it towards Kanzaki, Acqua, or Knight Leader.

She had purposefully sent it flying towards a group of knights working to treat the wounds of the collapsed Anglicans.

"Wha-…?"

With an explosive noise, a number of figures were knocked into the air.

In the instant it took Kanzaki to turn her gaze in that direction, Carissa had already swung Curtana Original. It created a piece of dimensional wreckage 100 meters long. It was a rectangular board that was twisted in the middle and it was a little reminiscent of a bamboo copter.

Carissa created an explosion at the end of the bamboo copter using the momentum to make the giant propeller spin. The bamboo copter was tilted at a 45 degree angle and it attacked the group like a wall that had become a giant rotating blade.

"Dammit!!"

Knight Leader exceeded the speed of sound as he jumped in front of the propeller trying to repel the rotating blade.

A shock then came from directly behind him.

It hadn’t been an attack from Carissa. He had been entirely focusing on a possible attack from her.

The attack that had hit Knight Leader had been from one of the injured Anglican magicians that was supposed to be an ally.

“…Ah…”

The magician looked just as shocked as Knight Leader.

The magician had not meant any harm; it had been a stray shot.

But Knight Leader still lost his balance as the giant rotating blade approached.

“!?”

Knight Leader frantically attempted to intercept it with his longsword, but he couldn’t get the proper strength behind it as he had lost his balance. Due to his incomplete attempt to repel the rotating blade, Knight Leader was knocked to the ground and the blade’s trajectory changed causing it to writhe around like a living creature. That led to it causing even more damage.

“No matter how concentrated the numbers of a group are, that does not change the fact that it is a collection of individuals.”

Carissa pointed Curtana Original above her head and gave a large swing. The giant piece of dimensional wreckage created was something like a giant suspended ceiling tilted at an angle. She was attempting to crush a large number of magicians from the sky with it.

“As such, every organization has openings allowing the connections between individuals to be severed. Even if the magical thoughts or scientific brainwaves are connected, those openings will not disappear.”

To protect her allies, Kanzaki tried to cut it to pieces using the wires of Nanasen,

but Second Princess Carissa jumped in. Receiving a whip-like kick to the gut, Kanzaki was knocked a good ways back.

“And a group that is truly brought together as a single individual is nothing more than a product of dreams.”

After striking it with dozens of long distance attacks, the magicians just barely avoided being crushed by the suspended ceiling which created vibrations that felt like an earthquake. During that time, Acqua had moved between the suspended ceiling and the earth using multiple high speed jumps before assaulting Carissa with Ascalon.

“Also, the more a group’s numbers grow, the more openings are created to cut it apart through.”

Making a tremendous noise, Ascalon and Curtana Original clashed at a point near their hand guards.

However, now that their connections had been broken apart to that extent, they were reduced to fighting on an individual level rather than as a group. And as individuals, even Acqua, who had been damaged during the fight in Academy City, was not as strong as Carissa with the power of the leader of the angels at her disposal as long as she was within the United Kingdom.

After the sound of a few strikes being exchanged, Acqua jumped backwards. He didn’t fall, but there was a dark red stain on his side.

“Whether you gather in the thousands or in the tens of thousands, I will not waver,” announced Carissa clearly as she rested Curtana Original on her shoulder.

This was not a fight among kids.

It was not that it was impossible to get an advantage over her. If there was a chance for someone else to rise up and take that advantage, she would seal it. Because she could prevent even a large group from taking that advantage, her advantage could not be overthrown.

“I am used to fighting in a group. Don’t forget that I am the one who excels at military matters even within the skilled members of the Royal Family.”

As if those words had been a sign, the nightmare began anew.

Part 2

Some people were watching that battle.

These people were not magicians, but could not be said to be completely unrelated to the fight either. They were the servants, cooks, and gardeners who worked for the Royal Family within Buckingham Palace.

The only people who could truly get near the Royal Family were people who were trained in magic and specialized in interception known as royal maids or armed aides. However, these people were different. Most of them had been brought in by Third Princess Villian and they were complete civilians with no real connection to the Royal Family.

They had managed to get inside London, but they had been unable to get to Buckingham Palace where the center of the battlefield lay. However, their hesitation had exposed their amateurishness. After all, the place they thought was safe could be blown away by Carissa at any time if she felt like it.

They watched the battle without realizing this.

Up until then, they had been more blessed by being British than they had ever thought possible. They had been given it all by Villian, so they wanted to protect her and they honestly wanted to fight for the Royal Family.

But they had no idea what they could do with such an overwhelming scene before their eyes.

Whether it was a military coup d’etat or a large scale civil war using magic that exceeded the laws of physics, it was simply too much for those servants. They had decided to fight in the subway tunnel, but they had only been able to stand unmoving with trembling legs at the crucial moment. It was the same at this time

too. There was no thought of shame or honor. Those small normal people were simply “afraid” upon seeing that battle developing before their eyes. It had exceeded the level of bravery or a sense of justice. Their reaction very well may have been the proper human reaction.

Carissa the tyrant was a symbol of despair.

Now that her true reason for fighting had been revealed, the servants trembled even more.

Even while battling the monsters known as Acqua of the Back and Kanzaki Kaori within the destroyed Buckingham Palace grounds and losing the majority of her knights, the second princess showed no sign of lessening her cruelty. In fact, she was applying even more severe and overwhelming violence to those who opposed her. Her attacks had left most of the professional magicians collapsed on the ground.

This was not an easy fight to join.

It was likely that they would be slaughtered the instant they tried. It was quite possible that they would get in the way of one of the professional magicians leading to the magician’s defeat and possibly even affecting the overall outcome of the battle.

Thinking along those lines, they had no choice but to stay where they were.

From a civilian viewpoint, they simply could not join in.

“It isn’t like we have any other choice,” someone said.

They were just regular people. Now that something like magic was being used, there was nothing they could do. There was one boy who fought with his clenched right fist despite being a normal person, but it seemed he did have some kind of special power. If they had some kind of power that allowed them to oppose magic and if they were the kind of person that would fight hijacking terrorists on an airplane, then they too would be able to unhesitatingly rush in. However, they did not have that kind of special power.

That was why they had no other choice.

“Do you truly think that?” said a voice.

The servants hurriedly turned around and saw a familiar face.

“Do you truly think that the difference between you and that boy is merely a difference between the abilities of your right hands?”

“…”

The servants remained silent after hearing the question come from someone else.

They really did know.

They knew that that boy was not fighting on the front line because of the special power within his right hand. They had a feeling it would be more accurate to say that the right hand of that boy who was fighting on the front line just so happened to have a special power within it. In other words, whether they could participate in the civil war or not was dependent on their courage and their bravery.

“Do you have what it takes?” the woman asked. “I do not care what personal feelings you may have. It does not matter what kind of subjective reasons you may have. I am merely asking if you have the tiny bit of courage needed to stand up and fight against this overwhelming fear that is threatening the country.”

Someone looked up upon hearing that question.

They all looked up, having decided that there was no need to hang their heads in shame.

Their answer was clear.

The servants decided that they would not lose to that boy when it came to their feelings. The reason they had just barely managed to stand their ground and not flee despite being aware that they were trembling from fear was because of their desire to fight. That was what had eventually led to them standing there watching the fight.

So they spoke.

They all said that they wanted to fight.

“Very well,” said the woman, Queen Elizard, as a powerful smile that looked like it should belong to the captain of a large ship appeared on her face. “Then come with me. I will make up for all that you are lacking.”

She had everything she needed.

All that was left was the come-from-behind win.

Part 3

A loud noise split the air within the Buckingham Palace grounds.

“…!!”

Carissa hurriedly held up Curtana Original, but she still felt a shock in her hands. She looked at the face of the attacker who had rushed in exceeding the speed of sound and gave her loudest yell of the fight thus far.

“So you finally show yourself, mother!!”

What had struck her sword had been the identical looking Curtana Second.

The true head of state cut in between Acqua and Knight Leader who had been on the verge of being pushed back and she swung the other sword that determined the king.

The two Curtanas pushed back and forth on each other as the two royals glared at each other.

“I don’t mind if you do whatever you want, but if you do, make sure you have a

plan better than mine. I have come to stop you because it looks like you are actually going to do worse than me.”

“Ha! Do you really miss the throne that badly!?”

An unpleasant noise rang out.

Of course, Curtana Original was the stronger of the two Curtanas. The two swords were not actually locked together. The Original was slowly sinking into the Second.

When the sinking had progressed to a centimeter, the two of them took action.

They crossed their short swords at high speed three times.

Each time sparks flew from Curtana Second. It did not look like two swords made of steel clashing. It was more like a softer metal being carved away during the engraving process.

“…No matter how much preparation is carried out, the clash between groups eventually comes down to a clash between Curtanas. It almost makes all the hard thought put into this seem idiotic.”

Carissa laughed in self derision while holding the unscathed Curtana Original.

The power they each held was clear.

“But in a battle between Curtanas, I cannot lose. My Original has more than 80% of the power and your Second doesn’t even have 20%. Surely you knew that this would be decided by who had more of the power since we are both wielding the same type of power.”

In response, Elizard gave a small smile.

It was not an act. It truly was the kind of smile that felt as if it had simply leaked out.

“…You are a surprisingly small woman, my daughter.”

“What?”

“You wanted to take responsibility for this silly monarchy and protect the British people by becoming a tyrant, utterly annihilating the enemy nations across Europe, and then surrendering control of the government to the people. That plan is on a grand scale, but did you realize that glimpses of your small-mindedness can be seen on its edges?”

“…”

Carissa did not respond with words.

She instead swung Curtana Original. Elizard responded with her own sword, but the Second became damaged even more than before.

Even so, Elizard’s expression did not change.

“Do you truly want to change this country? Even if the large pillars giving shape to the government must be torn down, do you want to protect the people? Then do not rely on any already existing system. If you’re going to do it, at least go this far.”

Having said that, the queen gave a large swing of Curtana Second and then let go allowing it to fly towards Carissa. Carissa hurriedly repelled it, but she suddenly realized something.

With its trajectory changed, Curtana Second shot off into the darkness and disappeared.

Queen Elizard had let go of the sword that gave her power.

“What…are you thinking?”

That act had been so reckless and had left the queen so defenseless that Carissa put herself on guard.

With a strategy based on Curtana, that had been a completely unthinkable option to take.

The one who had chosen that option, the queen, spoke with absolute confidence.

“This is a revolution.” Elizard stood completely open before Carissa. “Never

before has there been a revolution on this level. Throw out the framework. Someone who wants to overthrow the current stagnated theory cannot choose that same theory for herself. If seeing a historical first move like this surprises you, then you are still bound by the thick pillars of this country."

(Is she trying to say there is a difference in our courage?)

Carissa decided that the queen could be simply trying to cheer up the panicked people. It was true that it had been effective. It would not have been surprising if an idiot mistook Elizard for the one in control there.

However…

(Then I will respond as a tyrant. If I cut her down before them, it will all be over!! The death of Elizard will send them into an inescapable pit of despair!!)

Having made up her mind, Carissa swung Curtana Original upwards to slice the queen in half vertically as that death would most effectively let the fear spread.

However, she then realized something.

By the time she realized it, it was too late.

"This is…it can't be…!"

Something was wrong with Curtana Original.

As Carissa stared at the person who knew what exactly was going on, Queen Elizard spoke.

"I already told you: this is a revolution."

The sound of cloth flapping in the air could be heard. At some point, a large piece of cloth – no, a flag – had appeared in the queen's hands. On the front was the current national flag of the United Kingdom and on the back was the primarily white and green flag that had once been used as the national flag of Wales.

"The United Kingdom's national flag was made from a union of the flags of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Wales had already been absorbed by England at

the time the flag was created. Out of respect for each of their cultures, they are represented on either the front or back of the flag. …It was a bit difficult recovering this from the British Museum."

England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The symbols of the four cultures that made up the United Kingdom.

And they were also the foundation of the power controlled by Curtana Original.

"Of course, not just anyone could do this even with this at their disposal. …It was a mistake not to give my death the highest priority. After all, this is one of the pieces of magic on a national level that can only be used by the Royal Family."

Elizard waved the flag and it spread out across the night sky.

"Union Jack."

After the queen spoke the name of the spell quietly, she took a long breath.

"Hear my command," she said raising her voice.

Her loud voice sounded as if it would remain clear no matter how far it travelled.

"Take the enormous power that resides in Curtana and those gathered by the All-English Continent which is formed by the four cultures. Take that power and release it all so that it is redistributed evenly throughout every British citizen!!"

Part 4

With Elizard's words, Curtana Original lost its power.

No.

The power that had been stored up within it flowed elsewhere.

“Along with this power, I, Queen Regnant Elizard, give the following message to the British people.”

Curtana provided power to a pyramid made up of the queen and the knights.

But what was it that gave one the right to be a king or a queen?

If one followed that question to its extreme, one would see the true identity of *the spell Elizard had used*.

“A lot has happened in this day since the coup d’etat began. The military was dispatched, cities were conquered, a destroyer fired in Dover, battles were fought against the knights, and a bunker cluster was even fired on the capital. Many have received some form of damage from this while not knowing what was actually going on.”

That’s right.

Originally, any English person had the qualifications.

“But there is a power opposing you.”

The British Royal Family had been formed after many battles. If things had happened a little differently in history, some other people living in the United Kingdom could have been the ones with “royal blood” instead. With the possibility of immigrants from outside the country and political marriages added in, the breadth of the possibilities grew even further.

As such, there was a single point that was important: whether one was English or not.

It wasn’t an issue of bloodline or nationality. It mattered whether one loved England and whether one wanted England to be his or her homeland.

“I can’t reveal the specifics, but for this one night, you will all equally become heroes. You will become the kind of people that fight using those mysterious

phenomena that you have seen but did not understand! Right now, you can do anything!! And I want you to choose. For who and with who will you fight? Make that decision on your own!!”

On top of all that, the queen threw one more thing out there to those people who maybe, just maybe could have become a king or queen.

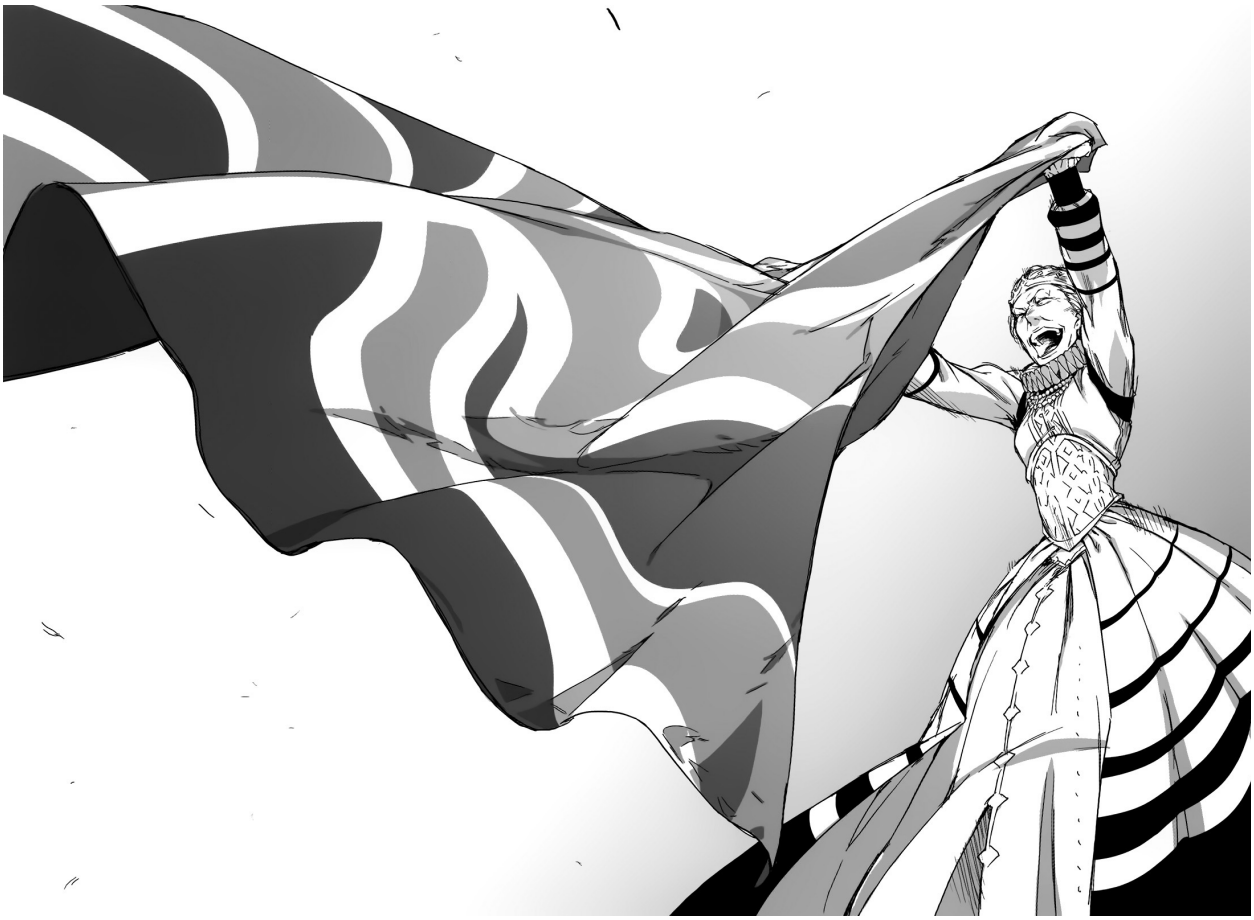
She spoke to those people who may have sat in the throne had history changed just slightly.

“I give my thanks to anyone who wishes to cooperate with me! If you would rather help the coup d’etat forces, that is fine too! And it is not a problem if you would rather choose some third path instead!! Just because you have this power does not mean that you must fight if you do not want to!! Anyone who feels this is just a bother just has to silently wish to ‘return’ the power. If there is someone you trust more than yourself, then silently wish for the power to be ‘passed’ to that person!! Right here, right now, that power is truly yours. Will you fight or will you run? You are free to choose whatever you wish!!”

They had a fragment of the power they might have held.

They had real power that could be used to move or change the country.

“Do not do something because someone else told you to or because someone else told you it was the right thing to do! Reject even my own words!! Put all the information you have in the order of priority you personally feel is correct and then think over it with your own head. When you are left with your own ideas of justice, courage, and bravery, act according to that!!”



Perhaps what Queen Elizard had surrendered to them was something quite simple. It was the very foundation of a democracy and it could be interpreted as being the most important thing.

“…Aren’t you fed up with being pushed around by the people with a higher position than you?”

It was just a mere single vote.

However, those people now held a “power” that truly allowed them to influence the nation.

“Now, it is time for a great number of heroes to stand up for themselves as the people’s general election begins!!” Queen Elizard yelled.

At that time…

In a certain place, a boy looked up. Things were in a state of emergency due to the sudden terrorism and war. He had been dragged from his house by a soldier and taken to a movie theater in a truck. He had been told he would be shot if he left the building, so he had been shivering from fear in the darkness. However, he slowly stood up upon hearing a voice resounding in his head.

(…I can run. I can just leave this to someone else.)

He thought over the conditions that had been explained. Fighting was just one of a number of options. The voice telling him to think it over himself before making a decision echoed in his head.

(I will fight.)

He came to that conclusion.

As he headed from the theater into the dark stairway of a corridor that led out, the boy happened across his parents. They did not look shocked upon seeing him. They merely nodded once.

(I want to fight!!)

The boy and his parents were thinking the same thing as they headed outside through the exit.

They crossed the final line they had been told they would be shot if they crossed.

It didn’t matter if they had power or not.

They just needed the courage in their hearts to step across that line.

In a certain place, a soldier keeping a great number of civilians confined to a large hotel clenched his trembling fist. He had gone along with the coup d’etat because he had felt it was best for England, but it seemed stopping the coup d’etat would save the one who had started it. So what had he been fighting for?

The soldier pressed his back against the wall and slid down to the ground. He had lost the urge to fight and he merely watched the door of the hotel open as a

number of London residents rushed out. Most likely, they would become heroes just like the queen had said. However, a puppet who had helped the coup d'etat like him had no right to do so.

Then someone stood before the squatting soldier. The person crouched over like someone getting on the same eye level as a small child and spoke to the soldier.

Most likely, the person had been one of the people confined in the large hotel. The middle-aged man seemed to be opposing the tyranny to protect his family. That proper hero who was fighting as a father turned to the villain who had confined him and spoke.

"We need your power. Fight alongside us. You were the one driving the armored truck, right? Please take us to the battlefield in that."

For a bit, the soldier silently sat there thinking. Finally, he reached into his pocket, pulled out the key to the truck, and stood up once more under his own power.

In a certain place, the boss of a magic cabal with its headquarters in the United Kingdom sighed. The girl of about 12 was half in shock over the emergency to the magic business.

"Boss. What do we do?"

"Idiot. You aren't hoping we're just going to give in to our youth and take part in this war, are you? She said we could 'return' it, so that's all we have to do."

"Couldn't we take this chance to try to analyze Curtana?"

"If we try anything, it'll just piss off the old hag in the crown. We need to stay out of this, stay under the radar, and keep an eye on this from the outside."

"I see. But, boss, your sister, Miss Patricia, already left looking quite excited."

"Then get her back here, you idiot!!"

The magic cabal boss's voice echoed through the London night.

In a certain place, Bayloupe, a girl who belonged to the organization known as New Light, lifted up her injured body. After losing in a fight against the Anglicans, she had been taken to a cathedral for both healing and confinement, but she had been shoved into some kind of hidden room when the coup d'etat had begun.

She pulled a marker out of a nearby pen holder and quickly drew a magic circle that activated a communications spell.

She didn't even have to think about who to contact.

"Can you hear me, Lessar?"

The response came immediately.

"Yeah, I can, Bayloupe. Floris and Lancis are connected, too. Simply put, what do we do?"

"I don't know…" Bayloupe slowly stood up as she lightly scratched her head. "Sigh. Well, it doesn't seem quite right since we helped bring about the coup d'etat, but we do what is best for the UK. So I suppose we have no choice but to act regardless of what shame or honor says."

In a certain place, the servants and gardeners who worked in Buckingham Palace rushed forward into the battlefield before them. The issues of whether someone was a professional or whether someone was out of place had all been resolved. Now everyone could fight evenly as long as they had the courage to take that first step.

"Lady Villian!!"

"Are you okay!? Are you hurt!?"

The third princess looked taken aback upon being surrounded by people calling her name. She had been thinking that her mother truly was different from her and that it was not at all surprising that people would gather around the queen, so the

princess had not thought that anyone would gather around her.

“…Why…?” she honestly asked.

She had been saved by servants in Folkestone and some had worked with her in the subway tunnel, but this was different. In the current situation, everyone’s hearts should be focused on the queen.

So why had they turned in her direction?

“There is no longer a distinction between a member of the Royal Family and a servant. Everyone must make their own decision and use their power to help everyone else. I am just a completely useless person who could only find hope in others and run away. There is no need for you to follow me.”

“Her Majesty the Queen said we should make our own decision and use this power as we see fit,” said one of the servants while looking Villian in the eye. “So will you let us use it as we see fit? Let us show that courage we were unable to show when the coup d’etat began or in the subway tunnel! None of us here want to see you hurt. This is what we all want, but we are all fools who cannot even take up a sword and fight! So just this once let us fight alongside you!!”

Hearing that, Villian was ashamed of herself.

She was supposed to be the princess of benevolence.

How could that be if she didn’t even notice those earnest feelings so close by?

“…Then also allow me to use my power as I see fit,” Villian said as she gripped her bowgun with renewed strength.

And she added silently in her heart: (Allow me to protect the future with these people.)

“Damn you…” Second Princess Carissa said in a low voice with Curtana Original in hand.

In response, Queen Elizard held up her empty hands and smiled like the

president of a large company taking pride in the company he had built up over a lifetime.

“This is quite the revolution, isn’t it? If you’re going to change history, you might as well make it something that enlivens all the people. No one will follow you if it only makes those with special privileges happy.”

The heads of state – old and new – glared at each other at close quarters.

However, Elizard met Carissa’s enraged gaze with a calm one.

“Your childish prank is over. I will now show you how to truly lead a country.”

“Don’t joke around!! What you’ve done is provide the powerless people with weapons and sent them to the battlefield while you have your fun watching them safely from atop your throne!! Do you want your position back so much that you’re willing to shove more power in the people’s bodies than they can handle in order to use them as shields!?”

“…Why can you not tell that thinking of it that way stems from your royal arrogance?”

In response to Carissa’s rage, Elizard drew back her smile.

However, this was not because she had been overpowered.

It was the opposite. The queen’s smile disappeared specifically to dominate the second princess.

“Who decided that normal people could not use Curtana’s power!? You planned to use Curtana to win the war and then allow the people to stop a runaway state. …It is true that may have been a convenient plan, but you were still using the large amount of power granted by Curtana Original that could only be used by someone with the special privilege of doing so. You were still imprisoned by the curse of being the head of state!! Such a small change would create nothing more than a slight distortion. If you want a revolution that will truly change things, you have to throw away any fear of what will happen to your own position!!”

“What…!?”

“My lecture against a child’s ridiculous desire to kill herself is something that comes solely from my position as a mother. Also…this country is not as weak as you seem to think it is to fall to despair over it so readily. You will see now that ninety million people here wish to save you enough that they have determined to become heroes!!”

At the same time as the queen spoke those words, an explosive noise resounded throughout the area. Carissa realized that it was the sound of a tremendous number of people’s footsteps, and servants, gardeners, and others who had no real knowledge of magic rushed in making up a sizable threat.

People from across the United Kingdom were gathering beneath the Union Jack to protect their country.

Part 5

Index was feeling a little wobbly after the bunker cluster blast. She was caught up watching the scene unfold as she continued to use the knowledge of the 103,000 grimoires to analyze the spells related to Curtana Original.

In the center of her vision, Carissa was using Curtana Original to fight against Elizard who had let go of her own Curtana.

A great number of figures flew through the air either to protect the empty-handed queen or to act as weapons. The figures were not just magicians. A maid who clearly did not know anything about magic aimed for Carissa from over 10 meters up in the air and a businessman wearing a suit knocked down a giant spike that had been created out of dimensional wreckage. The mixture of the normal world and the magic world created a never-before-seen stage.

Seeing that scene, the Anglican magicians who were being aided by the knights

stood up under their own power once more. It was not clear whether that was due to the Queen's Union Jack spell or if it was due to the professional magicians' pride not allowing them to lie idly by while amateurs fought with everything they had.

Upon seeing a large force with Kanzaki Kaori, Acqua, and Knight Leader at its center, the queen laughed and provoked her own daughter.

"What's wrong, Carissa? You're not looking too good! I admit that I would lose if it came down to the power held in the Original and the Second, but do you think you can maintain your advantage in a 90,000,000-to-1 game of tug of war!?"

"Shut it!! Don't think that th-this is enough to defeat Curtana Original! My Curtana may have lost a certain amount of its power due to what happened in the subway, but it still has more than 80% of what was left over!!"

"True. But if you lose focus for even an instant, that power will be stripped away by the hands of ninety million people. Make sure you don't get so focused on controlling things internally, that you neglect to focus on the attacks coming from the outside!!"

"!? So that's what you're after, you damn schemer!!"

Normal people such as students and store clerks continued to head in from the dark city of London. Some of them must have determined they were too far away, but a few dozen shots of light made tight arcs across the sky heading for Carissa.

"This is much like a large unit of a volunteer army attacking an extremely accurate piece of ritual magic that is being carried out in a large temple. Don't forget that every bit of power you lose control over and thus slips away adds to our strength."

"You can't fool me!! No matter how many people it is inside, it's still less than 20% of the total power! You cannot defeat me because I still have the other 80%!!"

Just by redistributing Curtana's power and giving the people Telesma, the people could not use supernatural powers. They needed the magical knowledge to know

how to alter that power and how to control it.

Of course, normal people did not have that knowledge.

So who was helping them do it?

“I see. Then I can’t simply leave this to the people. I really am more suited to working out in the field than just sitting on the throne anyway. …Having a real competition like this is quite fun.”

“!? That power…!! But you threw away Curtana Second!!”

“You fool, the queen is still British. I have the right to a single vote. I can only use my fists, but I am still going to be presumptuous enough to stand on the front line!!”

Index’s gaze became fixed on one point: Queen Regnant Elizard.

If anyone was doing it, it had to be her. When she had distributed the power evenly to the people from Curtana, she had used the communications spell both for her speech and to give them all the Telesma. She had changed its properties to match the user’s thoughts and had adjusted the Telesma so it was in a “convenient form” that would remain stable as they used it. In short, she had made it possible for those normal people to use the power they had acquired to carry out the actions as they imagined them in their head.

It was a simple enough concept to put in words.

In fact, Index herself had once indirectly performed healing magic by guiding Tsukuyomi Komoe. (Despite her perfect memory, her memories of events while in John’s Pen mode were hazy.)

However, she had only been able to do that because it was one-on-one.

Guiding all ninety million of the British people and continually preventing even one of them from losing control of their power would be impossible for Index even if she used the 103,000 grimoires to their fullest.

But that wasn’t even the most fearsome aspect of it.

The students and employees who had gathered at Buckingham Palace were viewing these mystical phenomena and they were fighting to stop the conflict by using the power they had received from Elizard.

Even though they were seeing those supernatural events with their own eyes, they were all explaining it in a way they would accept.

Some people may have thought the power hidden in the human body was being awakened.

It was possible that some believed that this was happening because they had gotten an overly amazing result on from their fortune telling.

Some people probably thought Elizard was an alien queen who had come from a spaceship.

There was a possibility some people interpreted it as the queen borrowing the power of the mysterious dinosaur hiding in Loch Ness.

While all these different theories were possibly being used to explain it, most likely there was not a single person among the ninety million who was led to the correct answer of magic.

Unlike when Index had guided Tsukuyomi Komoe by bringing her knowledge of magic to the forefront, Queen Elizard had completely hidden any hint that it was magic. The magic had been brought within the people in such a way that they could freely use it but could not approach the truth of what it was. In doing so, Elizard had completely avoided the terrible risk of contaminating the peoples' brains with knowledge from a grimoire.

Index looked around at the maids and cooks who were flying around through the air.

They did not know what it was that they were controlling.

And yet they were satisfied. They had gone beyond worrying about what rules were behind it or how it worked. They were merely giving their all to participate in this night's Halloween party.

That was Elizard.

She was a true queen who was overflowing with magic and who ruled the country in which the Anglican Church was based.

(Could it be…?)

The girl who had completely memorized 103,000 grimoires looked out on that battle and suddenly thought of something she had never considered before.

(Could it be that one of the reasons I was created was to provide support for this…?)

Kamijou Touma was also watching that battle.

A maid who had received a weapon from an injured knight was swinging around a giant sword while a few dozen police officers attacked a giant rotating blade-like piece of dimensional wreckage with simultaneous flying kicks. Carissa was desperately trying to control Curtana's power, so she was unable to use her sharp military talent to its fullest. She ended up merely recklessly swinging the sword around while becoming more and more cornered.

Of course, the professional magicians had not lost.

The more than 200 former Roman Catholic nuns were swinging their weapons together as a single group. A giant golem created from the objects around the area was blocking the attacks from the dimensional wreckage. A transport plane flew across the night sky, a large number of rune cards scattered about, and a giant of flames was created.

(Wow…)

Kamijou was truly amazed.

His amazement did not simply come from how Queen Elizard had turned everything around.

Kamijou's eyes sparkled at the sight of the many heroes rushing into and filling up the Buckingham Palace grounds.

(There are just so many protagonists that Index, Kanzaki, Acqua, myself, and everyone else are being overshadowed. What's with this country? Everyone's a protagonist.)

Most likely, the core of that spectacle was not Queen Elizard or Union Jack.

The power was merely a means.

The core was the people who had decided to grab that power and stand up to fight of their own free will.

Kamijou looked at Carissa.

The second princess swung Curtana Original and carried out one huge attack after another. She stood at the center of a giant typhoon known as a battlefield and looked as if she was being swallowed up by the waves of people. However, she looked lonely to Kamijou. For some reason, she did not seem like a "queen" to him.

Surely, Carissa actually knew just how much there was shining within the British people. It had merely been sleeping.

That was why she had been so desperate to protect them.

It was possible that there was nothing more to the fight than that.

However, she had relied on the military too much. Her destructive attacks had not merely been aimed at those outside. She had tried to hurt the people she was supposed to be protecting. In the end, it was similar to an overly powerful magnum hurting the hand of the one who fired it.

(I will protect her.)

Kamijou Touma clenched his fist anew within the battlefield.

(I will drag her out of this ridiculous chain of negativity.)

He then once more set foot in the hellish battlefield of overwhelming strikes from Curtana Original and spiraling diversions made up of dimensional wreckage.

And then…

“C T O O C U! S A A R T S T!! (Move Curtana’s trajectory up! Stop the slice and redistribute the excess Telesma!!)” yelled Index and Carissa’s arm that was holding Curtana Original twisted up unnaturally.

Now that Index had finished analyzing the workings of the magic, she interrupted it with Spell Intercept.

“Kh…!?”

Carissa gritted her teeth and frantically attempted to regain control of the sword.

She would most likely only be stopped for a few seconds.

Kamijou clenched his right fist tighter, but he wouldn’t make it in time from where he was.

So he naturally asked for help from someone on his side of the fight.

He would participate in this ultimate night to his fullest.

“Acqua!!” he yelled and the powerful mercenary responded.

Kamijou kicked off the ground reaching a height of only a few dozen centimeters and Acqua stuck Ascalon in the gap between his feet and the ground. Kamijou landed on the side of the giant sword like it was a surfboard.

Kamijou and Acqua did not discuss their strategy or even exchange any words at all.

They didn’t have time for that and they both already knew what had to be done.

Mere words were not needed at that point. Kamijou’s resolve could be seen in his entire body and Acqua, his former enemy, accepted that resolve by lending him his power.

“…!!”

Acqua gave a slight grunt and swung Ascalon around horizontally as hard as he could.

He was injured, but he still used the full strength of a Saint. It was clear what that action would do to Kamijou who stood on the blade.

An explosive noise rang out.

Kamijou Touma's body shot forward like a bullet due to Acqua's great strength.

(Wha-…?)

In that instant, Carissa was literally left speechless.

She could not take any attention away from bringing Curtana Original back under control. The boy with the right hand that could negate any kind of magic flew through the gaps of his many allies in a straight line for her.

At a point that may have been less than 0.1 seconds before impact, Second Princess Carissa clearly saw a powerful smile on Kamijou Touma's face as he tightly, tightly clenched his fist.

After flying over 30 meters through the air, Kamijou Touma's fist struck Curtana Original.

With that one strike, that sword that determined the king shattered.

Carissa did not even have time to check on it.

The fist that had shattered the sword continued on its path and mercilessly struck her face.

Like metal balls strung from strings striking each other, the momentum was transferred to Carissa causing her to fly off into the night sky like a bullet. She struck the roof of the crumbling Buckingham Palace once, bounced off in a different direction, and flew off even further along her altered trajectory.

Kamijou heard an unpleasant noise as his bones dislocated in his wrist, elbow, and shoulder all at the same time.

However, he landed after travelling 10 more meters before his face could be distorted from the pain. Of course, his own two legs were not enough to stop him, so he rolled along bouncing a few more times.

(Is it…over…?)

Kamijou tried to speak, but his injured body could only elicit a groan.

However, the answer to his question was displayed before him despite his inability to ask it.

With a high-pitched noise, he saw the broken end of the sword pierce into the black soil. Before his eyes, it started crumbling and was swept away by the wind.

Curtana Original was gone.

It meant that both Second Princess Carissa had been defeated and that the long coup d’etat was over.

Epilogue: The Nation and a Powerful Enemy Even Further Behind It All. *Next_Step.*

The coup d'etat was over.

At the same time, people lost the power they had gained from the queen's Union Jack magic thus returning them to merely being "normal people". The people had either been calmed down by the loss of power or they now had time to think as the battle was over because the students and businessmen started to look at the terrible scene before them with questioning gazes.

"…I certainly seem to have gone a little overboard here," said Queen Elizard with a smile that held a bit of self derision in it.

She picked up Curtana Second that she had thrown away herself. The legendary sword had been chipped in the fight with Carissa. She was thinking of having that boy utterly destroy it when she noticed a figure approaching.

It was Knight Leader.

"It pains me that I helped bring all this about…but what will we do now?"

"Quit worrying about something that's over, you fool. I thought this country's chivalry told you to act tough in front of a lady even if it killed you," Elizard said in response to the man who had helped start the coup d'etat that had shaken the country. "And what happened today is no real problem. Each person who took part will explain the mystical phenomena in their own way, but they won't reach the truth behind the spell. All this resulted in was a good story for them to tell their grandchildren in the future."

"But you cannot deny the possibility of someone realizing that it was magic."

"We will deal with that if it happens," was Elizard's immediate response.

It wasn’t that she hadn’t thought about it. It was the opposite. If she hadn’t thought about it, she wouldn’t have been able to put together such a major spell.

“If it comes to that, we can just admit it. We can tell them that magic exists and that it is protecting them behind the scenes every day. You could say it would be the rebirth of the magical country of England.”

“But…”

“History is constantly changing. There is no rule that says magic must always be hidden from the people’s eyes. And we would not be the first to have done so. In some African tribes, a type of sorcerer makes the decisions for the tribe. In other words, they leave the governmental control to those who can use magic. It is not an impossible form of government. It is nothing more than a revolution that could happen at any time if history takes a certain turn.”

Coming from Elizard who had thrust a revolution before Carissa who had almost completely gained control of the United Kingdom, those words held a lot of weight.

Elizard herself continued speaking in an exceedingly cheerful mood.

“…Now then. We need to go collect Carissa from wherever she was knocked away to. Hm? Where did that boy I need to give a commendation to go?”

Third Princess Villian restlessly looked around in an area a bit away from the groups of Anglicans and knights who had put an end to the coup d’etat. She was looking for someone, but she didn’t seem to be having much luck. She finally stopped moving as if she had given up and muttered something with a cloudy expression.

“…So William really did just leave without saying anything.”

“…”

Knight Leader standing next to her wasn’t quite sure how to respond, but he finally nodded.

“It seems the Russian Orthodox Church made some major move. It will likely have a major effect on the war between magic and science. Based on some information from a comrade of his who also left God’s Right Seat, William said he must take action to stop this conflict from a different direction than through the Anglican Church.”

“A comrade…” said Villian in a quiet voice. “Including you, everyone has gained so many things in the past 10 years. It feels like I alone have been sitting still doing nothing.”

It seemed Villian had been more hurt than a normal person would have over William’s lack of a farewell to her.

Seeing her face, some bitterness entered Knight Leader’s expression.

“(…That bastard. He always uses his casual position as a mercenary to leave all the truly difficult jobs to me.)”

“?”

His words to himself must have leaked out of his mouth because Villian was looking up at him quizzically.

Knight Leader hurriedly put his usual respectful expression back on his face and opened his mouth to speak.

“I have a message from a certain mercenary. He said it is something that must be told to you, Lady Villian, and to no one else.”

“What is it…?”

“He said: ‘One day, when this war is over and the world is at peace, I will return to England. I hope that, when I do, I will be able to hang my escutcheon in the corridor of Buckingham Palace where it was supposed to have been hung. I hope that I have the strength to protect my sword and the coat of arms on it and that you have the strength to overcome all the difficulties and obstacles you will face repairing Buckingham Palace’. …I suppose asking you to become a princess who is worthy of making such a vow to is that mercenary’s version of a proposal.”

"…"

Third Princess Villian's eyes opened wide in shock, but Knight Leader had actually added in some words that William Orwell had not originally said.

(…Well, that man uses too few words. If I passed it on verbatim, it would be a little too blunt.)

Only that man who had directly received the message knew how much was the original and how much had been embellishment. Knight Leader merely stuck his tongue out slightly so Villian couldn't see and thought.

(You know my personality well and yet you still gave me a message like that. You knew how I would pass it on, didn't you, William?)

Kanzaki and the other Amakusa members had been treating the wounded and transporting the seriously injured, but they were finished and were now gathering in a single area.

The one who started speaking first was Tatemiya Saiji.

"…So once again Kamijou Touma got the best part. I can only see this as another major debt you owe to him, Priestess. And the other ones are still sitting there gathering interest at near usury levels."

"Wait! Why are you saying the exact kinds of things Tsuchimikado does!? I'm clean on this one! I mean, we all joined forces and did everything we could, so the achievement should be divided equally among us all. There are no debts here, right?"

"So are you going with the Fallen Angel Ero Maid? Hm? Oh, you haven't used the Fallen Angel Maid yet. Which one do you think she should go with?"

"Don't just decide on something like this! I am never wearing that thing again!! N-Nomozaki, Isahaya!! I can't believe you're joining in on this at your age!! Please stop yelling for a repeat performance!!"

As Kanzaki repeated herself to them, the Amakusa men were united. They were

insisting that she put the Fallen Angel Ero Maid on right then because they had yet to see it.

Meanwhile, at a slight distance from that uproar…

“(...H-he fought for everyone this time, so I can interpret that as being indebted to him, right? Then I…um…have the right to do that, too…Ahh…☆)”

“Wait. Is this pure-looking girl’s lust coming to the surface now?” quietly muttered Tsushima, another female Amakusa, as she pointed at Itsuwa who was paying her no heed.

And then…

“A-a-ahhhh~~. I finally made it to Buckingham Palace…”

Hearing some odd Japanese, Kanzaki turned around to find Archbishop Laura Stuart sitting limply on top of an approaching horse for some reason.

“D-dammit, Elizard… As soon as you got that flag from the British Museum, you left the horse with me and ran off… Uuh, I just can’t match my rhythm with the horse’s movements. M-my back…”

As Laura sat limply atop the horse, the horse looked rather displeased in its own way. The horse neighed as if announcing its dislike of Laura.

“Nhh…And I ended up being of no help because of it. Why did I even bother coming at all?”

“…You say that…but I’m sure you were involved behind the scenes. The fact that a national-level spell like Union Jack has never been used before leads me to believe that it can’t just be activated whenever the Royal Family wants. I’m willing to bet you either gave some form of permission or forcibly unlocked it.”

Upon having that pointed out by her subordinate, Laura merely gave a meaningful smile instead of either affirming or denying it.

Despite Kanzaki’s suspicions, Laura Stuart asked for some unexpected help from her.

“A-ahh, I don’t have enough strength left to even stop the horse. K-Kanzaki… stop this horse and get me down.”

“Eh? I-I can’t do that. I’m not very good with horses.”

“But look how you’re dressed! You look like someone out of a Western!”

“No, this is just because I have gathered all the necessary items needed to construct my spells. I don’t actually know anything about hor-…… gwaaahhhhh!? It’s…It’s eating my ponytail!!”

Kanzaki looked in shock at her black hair that was now covered in horse saliva, but it seemed the military horse had taken a liking to her. While it stopped in front of her and tried to play with her, Laura slowly got down onto solid ground.

“O-okay. Now where is the boy who Kanzaki needs to service while wearing an exceedingly erotic outfit? I heard he was here in England, so I’d like to see him at least once.”

“Kh. You certainly know how to hit someone where it hurts despite being so late! And given all the magical incidents you’ve gotten that boy wrapped up in, aren’t you the one who should be wearing the Fallen Angel Ero Maid!?”

Second Princess Carissa lay collapsed on a London road.

There was still a bit of time until dawn. The coup d’etat was over, but the roads were still empty due to its effects.

She wondered where she was.

She thought she was 2 or 3 kilometers from the Buckingham Palace grounds. At any rate, she had been knocked so far away that she was having trouble figuring out exactly where she was.

“…”

Carissa looked at her right hand from her position on the ground.

Even then, the hand was still stubbornly holding onto Curtana Original's hilt. However, the blade had been broken off about halfway up and its magical power had been lost. The power of the leader of the angels must have returned to Curtana Second. She doubted her mother would keep the power, though.

For a while, Carissa remained silent.

She thought about her intentions behind fighting against ninety million people. Protecting the people? People that strong wouldn't lose their dignity just because the other countries were a little harsh. In the end, Carissa herself had been the one most afraid of that situation.

And then…

"Ha ha. Now this is something. I thought seeing you fallen to the ground covered in blood and dirt like this would be a rare sight, but I never thought it would be this pleasurable a sight," said a male voice.

Carissa dragged her aching body into a standing position to see a man with primarily red clothes standing there. His figure did not look very built, but she could feel an unnaturally odd pressure coming from him.

"Who are you…?"

Carissa gathered strength in her right hand, remembered that Curtana Original had been broken, clicked her tongue, and threw the hilt away.

"Who exactly are you…?"

"I am Fiamma of the Right. If that isn't enough of a hint for you, then you really need to rebuild your intelligence agency from the ground up."

"!!"

Fiamma of the Right.

He was the final member of God's Right Seat, the group that controlled the Roman Catholic Church from the shadows, and he was the member that wielded the greatest power. According to the reports she had read, he had half-destroyed St. Peter's Basilica with a single strike and it still wasn't clear whether the Pope,

who the attack had been aimed at, would recover or not.

After recalling all that information, Carissa suddenly looked up having remembered something.

“The angel you are aligned with is Michael… Curtana uses power from the same angel, so are you after this sword!?”

“Hm? Oh, I see, I see. I suppose I could have done it that way.”

Fiamma seemed to be joking around while Carissa carefully watched him.

She tried to provoke him to watch his reaction.

“But Curtana Original here has already lost its functionality. If you were planning to use the chaos caused by the coup d’etat to steal it, you’re out of luck.”

“Ah, that really is a shame. That really may have been easier,” muttered Fiamma as if he really wasn’t thinking about it too seriously.

It looked as if he truly did feel the way he said he did.

“No, I guess not. That wouldn’t work. It has the right type of power, but its capacity probably wouldn’t last. As soon as my power was passed into it, it would probably just be blown to pieces.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Oh, just boring gossip. By the way, you were half right. I used this chaos to come here to steal something that the Anglican Church has stored in the darkest depths, but that something is not Curtana.”

Fiamma gave some clearly facetious applause.

“Ahh, I suppose you really only got it a quarter right. Anyway, this is why I used the Roman Catholic Church to have the French government cause this unrest within the United Kingdom.”

“What…?”

“Really, I could have gone the route of pushing France and England to a serious war and then retrieving it from London once the city was burnt to the ground, but you were really much better in that regard. Thanks to your ridiculous game, I managed to achieve my goal without this capital turning into a storm of murder, looting, and rape.”

Carissa became enraged.

Without Curtana, the second princess did not have very much in the way of direct attack spells. Someone on an average level like her could not stand up to someone on Fiamma’s level.

As Carissa rushed towards him, Fiamma did not even move a finger.

A tremendous shock knocked Carissa over 100 meters away.

“C’mon, stop that. I’ve already accomplished what I came here to do. I have no real reason to take on a dreamer of a princess. That old queen may be different story, but I can just leave a small fry like you alive.”

Something large grew out of Fiamma’s right shoulder. It looked like a wing or maybe an arm, but it was a mysterious object that did not look like it belonged in this world.

“Tch. So it does break down in the air. I really did get my hands on something difficult to use.”

Fiamma approached with footsteps that sounded purposefully loud.

“What is this object that makes even Curtana pale in comparison? What did you sneak in and steal after going out of your way to start a war for!?”

Carissa coughed up blood as she yelled in rage, but Fiamma’s attitude did not change.

“You don’t know?” A smile seemed to split Fiamma’s face open as he spread his arms wide as if he were bragging. “It’s just a little piece of treasure. One that you of the Royal Family have been secretly using.”

Hearing that, Carissa’s body stiffened in shock.

She knew what Fiamma meant.

“You don’t mean…It actually exists…!?”

“So you really didn’t know. It was left right in the middle of Buckingham Palace, so I was pretty surprised, too. It must be a truly secret item. I guess that’s why the magicians who were instructed to run off with all the important items at the start of the coup d’etat didn’t take it with them.”

As Fiamma spoke in a singsong-like way, the third arm growing from his right shoulder slowly moved.

If it displayed its true ability, Carissa very well might be blown to smithereens.

“So, what are you going to do? Are you going to give up and live on or keep trying and die?”

“Shut it…”

Carissa slowly stood up as she wiped blood from her mouth.

She was standing at an angle because she was having trouble maintaining her balance, but her gaze alone remained strong.

“…I have a feeling I understand…why the Pope opposed you in the end…”

“Oh, do you? Then you can go join him in death.”

Something like powerful wind pressure attacked Carissa.

Carissa kept her eyes open and worked to drag her tattered body forward.

And then…

With a tremendous noise, a boy’s fist suddenly shot in from the side blocking Fiamma’s attack.

The power was so great, that the boy was blown back upon receiving it, but Carissa supported him from behind. Their shoes scraped along the ground a bit, but they just barely managed to hold their ground.

“What the hell are you doing…?” Kamijou said in a low voice as he swung his right arm around to see how it was doing.

Something seemed to be wrong with the bones and joints because an odd cracking noise reached Carissa’s ears.

Kamijou ignored that and glared at Fiamma, but he merely laughed.

This laugh came from the very depths of his gut.

“Kah ha ha!! What is with today? Are the stars aligned in my favor or something!? I thought you would be one of the last pieces of the puzzle, so I never thought I’d get two major pieces here!”

“…Who the hell are you?”

Fiamma was too busy laughing to answer Kamijou’s question.

Carissa answered instead while she looked as if she were about to collapse.

“He is Fiamma…Fiamma of the Right. Essentially, he is the leader of God’s Right Seat.”

That unexpected answer truly shocked Kamijou.

Finally, Fiamma looked back in Kamijou’s direction while still laughing.

“Oh, c’mon. At least let me make my own introduction.”

“Fiamma…”

He was the last member of God’s Right Seat, the group that controlled the Roman Catholic Church. He was the ultimate source of all the wars. If he were defeated, the large conflict might end.

Kamijou’s fist naturally tightened more than ever before and the third arm stretching from Fiamma’s right shoulder moved as if in response. He spoke while almost licking his lips.

“So you want to do this? Fine. I might be a little awkward though because I was only just getting warmed up.”

“Shut up!!” Kamijou yelled in anger and ran forward.

In that very instant, an explosive light was emitted from Fiamma’s third arm.

Sound disappeared.

Only the intense impact hitting his outstretched right hand got through to Kamijou.

When the light disappeared, Kamijou and Fiamma were still glaring at each other.

That single attack had held enough destructive force to wipe a large cathedral off the map.

“I see. As expected of the rare right hand that I’m after. Seeing it up close has me surprised yet again at how singular it is.”

His own attack had been negated, but Fiamma looked satisfied.

The third arm writhed like an independent creature, wriggled like a snake in great pain, and it started dissolving into the air.

“Time’s up, hm?” muttered Fiamma.

He looked at Kamijou who was focusing on the third arm.

“Don’t be so shocked. The right hand you use is quite similar to this. In fact, they’re similar in that they are both incomplete as well.”

Fiamma’s third arm then started struggling even more clearly.

For the first time, Fiamma frowned slightly.

“But I suppose it’s best not to lust after things. I’ll leave things here for today. I could easily kill you here, but I can’t be so sure that the spiritual item I stole wouldn’t be destroyed in the process. …I’ll have it sooner or later anyway.”

“The spiritual item you stole…?”

“It’s pretty cool. Wanna see it?”

All of a sudden Kamijou noticed something in Fiamma's hand. It was a metal lock. It looked like a dial padlock, but it had a lot of numbers. No, it had letters of the alphabet carved into it instead of numbers. The small rings shouldn't have had room to fit all 26 letters on them, but they were unnaturally all there as if by means of some kind of trick art. It was less like each letter was carved on individually and more like only the needed letters were displayed on a ring-shaped LCD display.

(What is that..?)

Kamijou frowned suspiciously.

"No!! Don't use that!!" yelled Carissa urgently.

However, Fiamma did not listen. He rolled the spiritual item around in his right palm using only his thumb to spin the dials on the cylinder-shaped lock.

Immediately afterwards, a tremendous noise rang out.

Something white broke through the asphalt and shot up from below.

It may have been something that had been travelling through the subway or the sewer. The asphalt was blown away within a radius of 10 meters from the center of the blast. Kamijou had been standing at the very edge of that range, so he was knocked back and Carissa almost fell down into the underground area.

The destructive power had been tremendous.

However, that was not what surprised Kamijou.

(Wha-..!?)

It was the identity of the thing that had suddenly attacked.

It was a human.

It was a girl with silver hair and green eyes.

It was a nun wearing a white habit with gold embroidery like a teacup.

Yes.

“…Index…!?”

Kamijou yelled out her name without thinking.

Why had she appeared in response to Fiamma’s signal? And how had she created that destruction that was clearly impossible with normal human strength? She shouldn’t be able to use magic, so how had she done something that clearly needed magical assistance?

Two things answered his numerous questions.

The first was what Fiamma said next.

“I suppose you could call it the external controller for John’s Pen, the safety device installed on Index Librorum Prohibitorum. It is a treasured item held only by the heads of the Royal Family and the Anglican Church. Of course, there’s the contamination from the original grimoires, so it’s really only a last resort. … Didn’t you find it odd? No matter how much she wanted it herself, did you really think they would leave the Index Librorum Prohibitorum that held the 103,000 grimoires in the middle of that city of science with no insurance whatsoever? And it was the Archbishop that created this cruel system.”

The second was what Index said herself.

“Yes, I am the grimoire library…belonging to Necessarius, the 0th Parish…of the Anglican Church. My formal…name is Index Librorum Prohibitorum, but… as a nickname it is abbreviated to…kssssshhhhhhhh.”

Index had been muttering expressionlessly, but she had suddenly started to shake unnaturally before she collapsed to the ground.

“Index!!”

“Oh, was John’s Pen damaged at some point? Well, it’s unfortunate that the body can’t be completely controlled, but it’ll still work out like this. …If I modify the spiritual item a bit to increase its ‘output’, I can most likely manage to freely access the knowledge of the 103,000 grimoires.”

Fiamma had the expression of someone holding a toy that turned out not to be as fun as he had expected.

“What did you do…? What the hell did you do to Index!?” Kamijou yelled much louder than he had before, but Fiamma merely spread his arms and shrugged.

“I don’t know. It’s their fault for not maintaining her properly.”

“You motherfucker!!”

Clenching his fist, Kamijou started to run forward truly intending to punch Fiamma this time.

However, Fiamma of the Right moved before he could.

He gave an order to his third arm and an enormous flash of light shot towards Kamijou.

“Well, I have to head to Russia in order to collect the ‘materials’ I need to call down an angel, so I’ll leave control of that right arm to you until then.”

“…!?”

Kamijou had instinctively pushed back against the strike with his right hand, but Fiamma was gone by the time his sight returned. All that was left was the bloody Carissa, the unconscious Index, and the wreckage created by the asphalt Index had destroyed.

A number of footsteps resounded throughout the building.

Sasha Kreutzev, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church’s Annihilatus, looked up. She put the thick book she had been reading on the table, took a gulp of her tea that had brandy in it, and slowly stood up from her chair.

She looked over to the window where her superior, Vasilisa, was checking on the conditions outside.

“This is bad. This is why I advised them that an alliance with the Roman Catholic Church would be a bad idea. It looks like God’s Right Seat’s influence has reached the Russian Orthodox Church. An order to capture you has been given, Sasha-chan, and even our fellow Russian Orthodox members have been dispatched.”

“My first question: Is Bishop Nikolai Tolstoy trying to profit from the actions of others again?”

“Do you have an idea what that bastard might be after?”

“…”

Sasha remained silent for a bit.

Thinking from a magic and a Christian standpoint, it probably had to do with the great amount of Telesma that had apparently been put inside her body at some point. Sasha didn't remember it herself, but from the analysis of the remaining traces, it seemed an entire angel's worth had been stored within her body temporarily.

Then Vasilisa briefly put on a serious expression.

"Hmm. Perhaps you are simply so cute that he is trying to steal you away from me. …If so, I might just have to take off that old man's head."

"My response ignoring your ridiculous opinion: This must be the result of the Roman Catholic Church wanting me for some reason and the Russian Orthodox Church having become their puppet. My second question: What do you intend to do now?" Sasha asked bluntly. "A supplementary explanation: Even if Bishop Nikolai Tolstoy's plans lie elsewhere, you still have a duty to obey this order if it is an official order from the church. If you help me anymore, you too will be punished."

"Mweeeen," said Vasilisa making some odd noise.

She pulled some old papers from her bag. They seemed to be various kinds of contracts for her job. Even if she was rotten, she was at a higher position, so she had a lot of annoying paperwork to deal with.

"Toryahh!"

Vasilisa suddenly started to rip the contracts to pieces.

"Wait, what are-…? My third question: What are you doing!?"

"Umm, I'm betraying the Russian Orthodox Church, rebelling against the country, and violating all my contracts related to that."

While Sasha's mouth opened and closed silently in shock, Vasilisa winked at her creepily.

"Yay!! I've made an enemy of quite a bit of the world!! Now I don't have to listen to the church's orders, so I can allllllways be on your side, Sasha-chan!"

“A-are you drunk? My fourth question: Are you in your right mind!?”

“I don’t matter. You just need to flee. C’mon, I’ve put a change of clothes, some money, and everything else you need to escape in this bag, so take it and escape through the window.”

As Vasilisa moved the conversation along on her own, she opened the window, pulled out a different bag from before, and threw it towards Sasha who was standing flustered by the window. The impact of the bag sent Sasha out the window and out the building.

Deep new snow awaited her below, so she likely wouldn’t be injured by the fall.

Vasilisa gave a small sigh just before the door was kicked down destroying the lock. Looking over, she saw a bewitchingly beautiful woman who was also a member of Annihilatus walking in.

“Oh, I had heard that Sasha Kreutzev had come here…”

Her name was Skogsfru.

Her name came from a Russian fairy. The fairy was a type that lived in the woods and would fall in love with humans, but their sex was so violent that the human partner would often be killed.

The woman’s body was tightly encased by her binding outfit, but the outfit was made of lace and leather to maximize her sex appeal rather than being an effective means of binding someone. She was an expert in all kinds of sexual magic.

“Oh, now that is the alluring type of outfit I like…but did that bastard Nikolai send you here to harass me for protecting Sasha-chan’s chastity?”

“Hm, and I really wanted to ‘play’ with that Sasha Kreutzev… I’m not really in the mood for an old hag, but they’ll be pissed if I do not do what I need to do. The higher ups seem to want to get on the good side of the Roman Catholic Church. Sorry, but could you just give up?”

“Now this could be a problem,” Vasilisa muttered slowly.

She then put her index finger to her lips and asked a question.

“Why do you think I was chosen to be Annihilatus’s mediator?”

“Ahn?”

“It was because I am the strongest in the organisation.”

With a roar, something invisible started swirling around.

Skogsfru frowned at the something that Vasilisa stood in the center of.

“Old cannibal woman of the one-legged house, please lend your power to this faithful daughter of little fortune,” Vasilisa sang in the voice of a little girl that did not match her age.

Vasilisa’s name came from the heroine in one of Russia’s model fairy tales. The heroine was oppressed by her stepmother and sister. A cannibal witch that lived in the forest grew fond of her faithfulness to her dead mother and gave her magical items that helped her gain happiness instead of killing her.

“Old cannibal woman of the one-legged house.”

Gently, Vasilisa removed her index finger from her lips and loosely bent the five fingers above her palm like she was grabbing a large brandy glass.

She was carrying out the *method to gain happiness* the witch had given the fairy tale heroine.

“Please give me the skull lamp. Give me the skull lamp that emits flames to burn my faithless stepmother to death.”

With an explosion, the two magicians’ battle began.

After falling from the window onto the fresh snow, Sasha Kreutzev reluctantly ran across the extremely cold land in order to keep Vasilisa’s determination from being all for naught.

The temperature was about -5 degrees.

Even that was actually still warm. The temperature in that area went down to -20 degrees and could even stop a tank in its tracks.

As she used magic to give herself a bit of insulation and to maintain some heat, Sasha headed across the land as the wind blew snow up from the ground. When a strong gust of wind came, the blast of snow would completely obscure her vision.

Even so, any pursuers would still be able to accurately track her.

Something sparkled in the distance. As soon as she noticed that, a mass of snow right next to her was blown away creating a crater. Sasha frantically laid down on the ground. A second and then a third long distance projectile attack hit creating more explosions.

Sasha was now unable to move and she could tell a different group was approaching. Sleipnir was an 8-legged metal horse that was meant to be used in the intense cold. The ones riding those mobile spiritual items were likely a pursuit party made up of Annihilatus members.

(At this rate…!!)

Sasha gritted her teeth, but then someone suddenly grabbed her arm. The person forcibly pulled her up to a standing position.

“This way. Really now, this has become a real pain.”

It was a strange woman dressed all in yellow. She was wearing thick makeup and had piercings.

The woman’s outfit was definitely strange.

“M-my first question: Where did you-…?”

“Over there. The snow hides the entrance to the cave.” The woman wearing yellow continued to pull on Sasha’s arm. “I was right to change the route to Russia instead of England. Given the situation, I knew that bastard Fiamma would be after you.”

“U-um…My second question: Where are you-…?”

“Where, where, where. What are you, a novice sightseer who can do nothing but just follow the guide around? Where were you even planning to run away to if I wasn’t here?”

“Uuh…” was all Sasha could say as an expression appeared on her face that would probably have made Vasilisa faint had she seen it.

She had been so focused on simply running away that she hadn’t come up with a real plan. But that wasn’t too surprising since she had suddenly become a wanted person throughout the huge country of Russia.

However, the woman in yellow just put on a look of exasperation.

“Well, whatever. At any rate, the Roman Catholic – Russian Orthodox Alliance has brought the influence of God’s Right Seat here to Russia. You won’t be able to rest until you have left the country.”

“…”

“I suppose the closest border is into the Elizalina Alliance of Independent Nations. I have no real duty to help you out this much, but I don’t like the people who are after you. If it’ll give them a nice surprise, I’m willing to do things I’m not used to.”

“My third question: You said the Elizalina Alliance of Independent Nations, but…?”

“Again: I’m not a guide. But it’s a collection of smaller nations that declared their independence because they did not agree with what Russia has been doing in recent years. There, what the Russian Orthodox Church or the Roman Catholic Church wants does not matter.”

“No, not that… To repeat my third question: It seems we are a very important target for the Roman-Russian alliance, so wouldn’t heading to another country create a reason for them to bring war…no, a military invasion there?”

“It’s already too late. The attacks by the Russian military on the countries that declared their independence have already begun.” The words of the woman in yellow clothes made Sasha gulp. “The Russians believe that they will win this war by getting close to the Roman Catholic Church. They have been a bit

overzealous and have begun invading those nations already believing themselves to be the new rulers of the world. If nothing is done, they will be indiscriminately bombing the Elizalina Alliance from the air before long."

"That can't be…but…my first response: That is no reason to bring in a spark that will light the fires of tragedy with 100% certainty."

"It's quite the opposite, you idiot," the woman in yellow said completely rejecting Sasha's opinion. "If important targets like us are there, Russia will be unable to slaughter people indiscriminately with bombings and bombardments. They can't risk killing the people they need to recover. Also, the Anglican Church and Academy City who want to stop God's Right Seat – it's really just Fiamma of the Right, I guess – will naturally look towards the Elizalina Alliance. This is a good chance to intervene in international society and there is a chance that it will also prevent Russia from attacking."

"My fourth question: Then-…?"

"Well, from now on you will be hiding out at an inn, so it is polite to at least pay the rent."

Sasha obediently nodded in response to this unexpected ally she had made.

The woman in yellow then looked at Sasha's clothes with an exasperated look.

"And what's with your clothes? If you're going to be in hiding, shouldn't you wear something that doesn't stand out quite so much?"

"My second response: I do not think someone wearing only yellow has any right to say anything about my clothes, but my superior prepared everything I will need."

As Sasha spoke, she pulled the change of clothes out of the bag Vasilisa had given her.

It was Magical Powered Kanamin's dress.

"Wait, why are you putting it back? …Hah? You say you're going to go punch your damn superior? Wait, stop! Please, stop, stop, stop, stop!!"

Kamijou Touma stood staring blankly into the distance.

A number of people had gathered around the area of road where Index lay. Even the professional magicians of the Anglican Church looked bewildered.

No matter how long they waited, Index didn't seem to be waking up.

Kanzaki Kaori looked up from her crouching position next to the unconscious girl and spoke.

"Her breathing and pulse are normal. Her life is not in danger."

Even after hearing that, Kamijou's heart did not feel relief.

He still didn't understand what exactly had happened.

"…What's going on?" came a quiet voice.

It hadn't been Kamijou's voice. The voice had come from Stiyl Magnus who was approaching the area along with Laura Stuart. When he finally regrouped with everyone else, the first thing he saw was Index collapsed on the ground.

"What the hell is going on!? How long…how long are you going to continue tricking others and hurting her!?" yelled Stiyl as he cast off the relationship of superior and subordinate and grabbed Laura's collar. However, there was no major change to Laura's expression.

"Stop it. The many safety devices installed on Index Librorum Prohibitorum are necessary measures to guarantee her basic human rights," said Elizard from the side.

Stiyl remained silent as the queen continued.

"If there was no device allowing her to be controlled from London remotely, the danger of someone abducting her would simply be too great. We would probably have to keep her permanently confined in a room in the Tower of London with her arms and legs severed so she could not escape."

“Are you…serious?”

“Those 103,000 grimoires are not something that can be dealt with using only our personal feelings. If we do not have complete control over her, we would have no way to counter an argument saying she needed to be killed because she was too dangerous. …It was necessary to prepare numerous safety devices to prevent such extreme arguments.”

“God damn it!!” Stiyl cursed as he violently thrust Laura away from him.

(What is this?)

Just a bit ago, everyone had been joined together. It was all set to end with a nice happy ending. But just because that Fiamma of the Right had appeared, it had all fallen apart. In an instant, their unity had been shattered and they were left arguing.

The final member of God’s Right seat.

Fiamma of the Right.

“One of the important elements making up John’s Pen, the collar, was destroyed by Imagine Breaker, so it is impossible to make any predictions using the original plan,” Elizard said to Kamijou. “This kind of malfunction occurred because we had not tested the use of the long distance control spiritual item since the collar had been destroyed. If Fiamma attempts to access her knowledge while she is like this, it may do even more harm to her body.”

As she spoke, she knelt down next to Index and picked her up in her arms.

“You know what needs to be done, right?” Elizard said as if making a challenge. “We will look after her here. We are the ones that created her framework in the first place, so we will carry out specialized healing and will attempt to cut off any interference from Fiamma. However, that will not be enough. Unless he is defeated and the long distance controller is destroyed, her safety cannot be guaranteed.”

“…”

For the safety of the United Kingdom, the queen could not leave.

That was completely correct and Kamijou had no argument against that.

And he had never intended to force anyone to help him.

“Stiyl,” Kamijou called out to the red-haired magician. “I’m gonna go punch Fiamma. While I’m gone, you take care of Index.”

“…Are you serious? Are you telling me to sit back and not go after the person who did this to her!?” Stiyl yelled while looking like he was about to punch Kamijou, but Kamijou himself grabbed Stiyl’s collar and dragged him close.

Kamijou then whispered into Stiyl’s ear.

“(…Can you guarantee that the people who put together so many different schemes regarding her won’t do anything more to her!?)”

“…!?”

“(…I don’t know any of the details about the workings of magic, so I might miss some kind of trick even if I watched over her 24/7. And it’s all over if they refuse to let me in some magical facility because of my right hand. That’s why I’m asking you!! You’re a magician I know who won’t just go along with what the church wants and will protect Index if it comes down to it!!)”

Having said what he had to say, Kamijou pushed Stiyl away.

He didn’t like thinking about it that way, but he had to. Fiamma had once more brought out the gaps between the different groups and individuals that had been joined together not long before.

Feeling bitter, Kamijou turned towards Queen Elizard and spoke.

“…He might have just said it to purposefully disturb us, but if what Fiamma said is true, his next target is probably Sasha Kreutzev. Members of God’s Right Seat can use angel spells, so Sasha is probably too good a target to pass up. …After all, a real archangel once resided in her body.”

“I wish to hide the fact that we have lost control of Index Librorum Prohibitorum as much as possible. However, it also means that we will not have a just cause to rescue her. In other words…”

“...I don’t need any help,” muttered Kamijou.

It wasn’t that he had no feelings. The anger that had been simmering in his chest was finally erupting from his body.

“I’ll get help on my own. I’m headed to Russia to go punch out that bastard Fiamma.”

There were two things that Kamijou Touma had not said.

The first was that he had lost his memories regarding the incident with Index.

The second was about the third arm that had come from Fiamma of the Right’s right shoulder.

That collection of mystical power had appeared as if it were breaking out from Fiamma’s true right arm and he had said that the right hands they used were similar.

There were tons of things he needed to ask him.

And after he had, Kamijou swore that he would unhesitatingly punch him.

Afterword

To you who have followed along in order from the very first volume: Welcome back.

To you who read all 20 volumes together at once: Welcome.

This is Kamachi Kazuma.

Finally, the 20th book! And this completes the British Royal Family arc!! This afterword will discuss content from both Volumes 17 & 18! What did you think of this story about the legendary British blade of Curtana? With a certain mercenary's appearance in Volume 17, the word "knight" was quite prominent, but Volume 18 focused more on the word "queen". By the way, the Curtana does exist, so make sure to check that out. It is used in the coronation of the British monarch even today.

I feel that the queen in this story, Elizard, is the ideal leader. She is the perfect queen who possesses the strong points of First Princess Rimea, Second Princess Carissa, and Third Princess Villian. In the story, the queen wonders why her daughters are all at such extremes, but she was only able to say that because she possesses what the three have in perfect balance. The princesses may strongly resemble something from a picture book or a fairy tale. Brave Third Princess Villian who was oppressed by her sisters is especially like the stereotypical heroine from a picture book.

Other than the royal family, there were glimpses of where Silvia, who appeared in SS2, fits into the story and the magic cabal boss who appeared on the pages of Dengeki Bunko Magazine also made an appearance here. If you have time, make sure to check those out.

My thanks go out to my illustrator, Haimura-san, and my editor, Miki-san. It

must have been tough to go through all those difficult battle scenes, so I am truly thankful.

And I also give my thanks to the readers. It is thanks to your support that the protagonist Kamijou Touma was able to make it through 20 volumes. Make sure to stay with him in the future, too.

Now it is time to close the pages for now while praying that the pages of the next book will be opened.

And I lay my pen down for now.

There are multiple types of beast maid outfits in this world.

-Kamachi Kazuma

Toaru Majutsu no Index — Volume 18

Author: **Kamachi Kazuma**

Illustrator: **Haimura Kiyotaka**

Translated by **Js06**